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# **PROBLEMS OF THE ANTILLES**



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# PROBLEMS OF THE ANTILLES

A COLLECTION OF SPEECHES AND  
WRITINGS ON  
WEST INDIAN QUESTIONS

BY  
NORMAN LAMONT

GLASGOW: JOHN SMITH & SON, LTD.  
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**TO**

**A. E. L.**

*The author desires to express his thanks to the Editors of The Contemporary Review and The Empire Review for their kind permission to reprint articles which originally appeared in those publications.*

## P R E F A C E

DURING the last quarter of a century few years have passed of which I have not spent four or five months in the West Indies. Even when absent from those enchanted islands, I have been led by duty, by interest, and by inclination, to study closely their affairs. This little book, then, makes no claim to emulate either the picturesque impressions of the passing tourist, or the laborious researches of the local historian. Still less does it aspire to rival those compendious volumes—part guide-book, part history, and part statistical abstract—composing the numerous “Series,” which are so rapidly filling the book-shelves of our libraries. It is merely a collection of speeches and writings drawn forth from time to time by practical problems arising during that critical period of West Indian affairs between the appointment of the Royal Commission of 1896 and the present day. Some of these problems have now been solved: others are in process of solution: one—the Sugar Bounty question—has, unhappily, just been re-opened. Others, such as the establishment of a College of Tropical Agriculture, and the great

problem of West Indian Federation, remain to try the mettle of our statesmen in the future.

In preparing these pages for the press, little alteration has been made in the text. Much compression has been expedient; though much repetition inevitably remains. Verbal corrections have been freely made. On the other hand, No. XI. has been reproduced as actually delivered, instead of in the condensed form of the Hansard report. But, throughout, opinions and arguments have been left untouched. How far those opinions and arguments have been, or are being, justified by the actual course of events it is for the reader to judge.

NORMAN LAMONT.

KNOCKDOW,  
*September, 1912.*

## E R R A T A.

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Map of West India Islands at end.

Page 175, 8th line from foot, should read "But  
it is unlikely" et seq.



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# PROBLEMS OF THE ANTILLES

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## I

MEMORANDUM PREPARED FOR THE WEST  
INDIAN ROYAL COMMISSION,\* 1897, by  
Mr NORMAN LAMONT, of Palmiste, Trinidad.

THE above-named property is an agglomeration of six small adjoining estates, two of which have been in the family of the present proprietor since about 1820; and the others added by subsequent purchases, representing a total outlay of £70,000, and an extent of 2,200 acres, equipped with managers' houses, barracks for coolies, hospital, etc.

Until the year 1883, work was carried on at four separate factories, the process being the old "Copper Wall;" and the sugar was Muscovado, its cost of production averaging £14, 2s. 7d. per ton.

In 1883 and subsequent years prices fell heavily, and it was determined to try and meet this by the erection of a thoroughly modern central factory, capable of turning out 15 or 20 tons per day, fitted with a powerful mill, triple effect, vacuum pan, etc.

This was done at a cost of £26,600, and in the succeeding years  $5\frac{1}{2}$  miles of tramway were laid at a cost of £8,000, for the more easy, rapid, and economical transport of canes to the factory.

After a year's confusion, owing to the difficulty of

\* Cd. 8656. Appendix C. p. 182.

getting the new regime introduced and into working order, the result was to enable us to produce a much larger quantity of a much higher grade of sugar (worth, say, £3 a ton more than Muscovado) at £11, 18s. 8d. per ton, a reduction of £2, 3s. 11d.; and varying profits and losses resulted, as the market was now gradually falling every year, under the influence of the increased production of the Continent, stimulated by the bounty system.

However, in 1893 prices rose, and a fair profit was made; and it was decided again to modernise the appliances for manufacture. A large mill for double crushing, a more efficient triple effect, and a third vacuum pan were added at a cost of £20,000, making the total capital invested about £124,600, and enabling the factory to produce 28 to 30 tons of sugar per day.

Immediately thereafter prices again fell, and have continued at their present low level (with slight fluctuations) ever since; and in spite of a further reduction in cost of production to £11, 7s. 8d. per ton (in 1896, £10, 11s. 6d.), heavy losses have been made annually.

This is solely due to the bounties, which have brought about the immense over-production of Europe. Matters would have been much worse, but for the elimination of the Cuban crop owing to the revolution in that island.

Nothing more can be done in Trinidad to reduce cost, as the machinery is up to date, and wages cannot be reduced below the level of 25 cents per day, payable by law to the indentured coolies.

Cane farming has been mentioned as a possible remedy, but I believe that at present prices it would

but serve to *diffuse the distress*, as planters cannot afford to pay a price for the canes which would be remunerative to the farmer. But in good times undoubtedly this industry would be a most useful adjunct, and would serve greatly to direct the energies of the free coolies and negroes, and to develop the Colony by creating a small peasant land-owning class.

Should the present depression continue for two years or more without anything being done on the part of the Government to try to remedy it, almost every estate in the Colony will be abandoned. Many of the owners are already heavily in debt, and those who are not wish to leave an evidently sinking ship.

What the result to the Colony would be of the sudden throwing out of employment of about 40,000 labourers I leave the Commission to judge, but after the 1898 harvest will be the dangerous time.

Where new processes have *not* been introduced, as in Barbados and Jamaica, the reason has been want of capital, as the estates in those Colonies are owned for the most part by small resident proprietors.

Where they have been introduced, the policy would undoubtedly have justified itself—as evidenced by the great reduction in cost—had not the over-production caused by the bounties reduced the price of sugar much faster.

The paradox follows, that the planters who have not modernised their machinery are much better off as regards the future than those who have so spent a large part of their capital, inasmuch as they can abandon with less loss, and turn their attention to the growth of other crops where that is feasible.

I cannot think, then, that the rumoured plan of enabling planters to borrow money for centralisation is at all a wise one. In Demerara and Trinidad centralisation is a *fait accompli*, and in the other colonies it would be merely throwing good money after bad, unless something is at the same time done to obviate the pernicious effect of the bounties.

As regards minor industries, Jamaica is vastly better situated than Demerara or Trinidad, being five or six days nearer to the New York market. Fresh fruit and other perishable commodities can therefore be profitably grown.

Sir W. Robinson attempted this, without success, in Trinidad. In Grenada, nutmegs and other spices have done very well, but it must be borne in mind that the market for these products is very limited.

Cacao is grown very largely in Trinidad, but on very few of the sugar estates would the soil or other conditions be suitable for it, and it is not now paying at all so well as formerly. It, however, is a crop grown with very little labour, and were the whole available land in the island under this crop, there would not be employment for the population now engaged in cane culture.

It is impossible to believe that absentee ownership constitutes a cause of depression in prices, and from this depression alone is the industry suffering. In fact, the estates of the largest local proprietors in Trinidad are in far worse plight than any of those of equal size, whose owners are absentees. Again, many of the so-called absentee proprietors spend four or five months every second or third year on their West Indian estates, and when at home keep a careful eye on their management. Other estates

again, are owned by companies, whose shareholders are inhabitants of England.

*Labour.*—The number of labourers on the Palmiste Estate is as follows:—

	Indentured Coolies.	Free Coolies.	Coloured Creoles.	Total.
Men . . .	302	369	56	727
Women . . .	135	184	22	341
Children . . .	114	165	—	279
Outside Labourers	—	—	—	75
				—
				1,422

*Average cost of Production, at Palmiste, from 1892-95  
(on shipping weights).*

	Per Ton Cane.	Per Ton Sugar.
Staff and Superintendence . . .	\$0.45	\$4.86
Transport . . . . .	0.21	2.21
Stock . . . . .	0.51	5.54
Maintenance and Taxes . . .	0.14	1.48
Hospital and Immigration . . .	0.36	3.83
Manufacture . . . . .	0.74	7.77
Reaping and Delivering . . .	0.34	3.65
Maintenance of Machinery . . .	0.24	2.68
Cultivation . . . . .	2.18	22.95
	—	—
Total	\$5.17	\$54.97
	(£1:1:6½)	(£11:9:2)

As contrasted with an average Demerara estate of equal production, the cost of transport in Trinidad is much higher (especially in hilly Naparima) than in Demerara, where the canals afford a cheap method of bringing in cane. The return of sugar per acre is usually lower, but on the other hand the cost of management and cultivation is often less. In Barbados, where no indentured system is necessary, because of the redundant population, wages are

considerably less, and this has enabled the industry to exist, although no centralisation has been attempted.

In Demerara and Trinidad the cost of public officials' salaries is enormously high as compared with Jamaica, Barbados, and other colonies, involving an unduly high taxation. The following is taken from the Colonial Office List of 1895 :—

Colony.	Population.	Cost of Officials.
Jamaica . . . . .	639,491	£134,183
Barbados . . . . .	182,306	50,812
Trinidad . . . . .	200,028	106,868
Demerara . . . . .	288,328	174,003

In Jamaica, therefore, as compared with Trinidad, three times the population and three times the extent of territory are governed for an expenditure only larger by one-third, and Demerara's case is stronger still. Federation of the colonies would undoubtedly lead to a great economy and increased efficiency in this, and in all departments, though the proposal would very likely be met by the hostility of local politicians, whose importance would be diminished.

Venezuela would appear to be the natural market for a large portion of the Trinidad crop, but her markets (like those of the Continent of Europe), are closed by a high protective tariff. In Canada the tariff is half a cent per lb. on sugar under No. 16 "Dutch Standard," so this market is also to a great extent closed to us. There remain, then, only the United States and the United Kingdom, the latter of which is completely dominated by the bounty-fed sugars of Europe ; while in the former

the 40 per cent. *ad valorem* duty, and the fact that there is but one consumer (the Trust), neutralise the effect of the high price of sugar.

Rum has never been made at the Palmiste factory, the offal crop of molasses having been sold to distillers in Martinique, at an average price of 10 cents per gallon down to 1893. From then, however, the price gradually declined to 3 cents in 1895, but in 1896 rose again to 4½ cents.

In the existing state of the market, with no guarantee that prices will not fall still lower owing to further increase in the bounties, the proprietor does not deem it advisable to spend further capital on the erection of a still or any costly improvements, and looks to abandonment after the reaping of 1898 crop as the only means open to him as an individual of avoiding further annual losses ; he has, moreover, means of knowing that many of the other leading Trinidad proprietors take the same view of the case.

With regard to remedies for the existing disastrous state of affairs, there would appear to be two courses open. The first is to put a countervailing duty on bounty-fed sugar imported into the United Kingdom. This, by removing the entire *raison d'etre* of the bounties, would probably lead early to their abolition. Secondly, to allow the West Indian colonies to form their own reciprocity treaties with the United States of America when the forthcoming revision of the United States tariff is being arranged.

## II

### CANE FARMING

(*A Letter to The Mirror, 1st April 1901*)

SIR,—I have read with much interest the correspondence in your columns upon the cane-farming question, as well as your editorials, which have summed up very fairly the opposite views prevailing.

With regard to the abstract justice or injustice of the factory owners refusing to take farmers' canes as fast as they are offered, I do not intend to deal, but my own experience is that the farmers are, taken as a body, too prone to "rush" their canes to the factory during the early part of the grinding season—often before they are fully ripe, with the obvious consequences that the factory has far more cane than it can cope with during February and March, and that it can hardly make a full day's work during April and May. This difficulty argues a considerable lack of organisation on both sides, and will probably be overcome in time, either by limiting the daily amount of cane to be delivered (no easy matter in the case of several hundreds of small farmers), or by following the Cuban precedent of increasing the ratio of sugar (or its money equivalent at market value) to be given for a ton

of canes from, say  $4\frac{1}{2}$  or 5 per cent. in February, to 5 or  $5\frac{1}{2}$  in March, and  $5\frac{1}{2}$  or 6 in April or May, *i.e.*, paying more for riper cane.

Your Savana Grande correspondent of the 28th ult. asserts that "hundreds of peasant proprietors and others are doomed to suffer, as the factories are too few to cope with the industry in its present magnitude," and invokes capitalists to establish a new Usine, a wish which finds an echo in your leader; while your contemporary goes further and suggests the establishment "of a central factory under Government control."

Now, I believe that such an institution as that would be of incalculable advantage, not only to this colony but to the whole of the British West Indies, if, like Audubon Park, New Orleans, it were conducted not only as a factory, but as a sugar school where the theory and practice of sugar manufacture should be taught by a staff of capable lieutenants under such a head as Dr Stubbs, or Dr Maxwell of Queensland. Perhaps a scholarship might occasionally be given by each or by certain of the various West Indian colleges to enable its holder to follow a two or three years' course at the sugar school. In this way the factories of the West Indies might in a few years be manned with managers, chemists, and engineers of Creole instead of Scottish, German, French and American nationality; our factories would be able to compare in exactitude of scientific control (as many of them already do in modernity of machinery) with those of Egypt, Cuba, Louisiana, or Hawaii, and a much-needed alternative would be provided for a young Creole entering upon his career, at present

apparently limited to the already overstocked medical profession.

Further, the Government factory or sugar school would not be entirely dependent upon farmers' canes, but should have a few hundred acres of land attached to it where the student would learn to give a practical application to his theoretical instructions on the agriculture of the cane. I might be accounted a visionary were I to prognosticate the advent of so desirable a *rara avis* as an overseer who should be acquainted no less with the principles of intensive cultivation than he now is with tillage as practised by his forefathers, but at any rate the sceptical planter of the old style might actually handle one of Dr Morris's epoch-making canes, containing 50 per cent. more sugar than the "Bourbon," and might see with his own eyes (at least for a year or two) Mr Lefroy's gang of young female Barbadians collecting, each, daily the eggs of the insidious moth-borer from the leaves of 3,000 cane stoles.

Such would be the advantages of a Government central factory, which, in the interests of science, is most urgently demanded, and, in my opinion, would do far more to resuscitate the sugar industry of the West Indies than all the recommendations of the Royal Commission and the West India Committee put together. But so far as the demand for another factory is based solely on the alleged over-production of canes in the Naparima and Savana Grande districts, the case falls to the ground, for there are at least two ways, far simpler and less precarious, of dealing with the question. In the first place it is impossible

to argue that the factories have attained anything like their maximum possible output as long as only two of them out of eleven work night and day.

In the second place, the absolute neglect of South Naparima (which has been, from time immemorial, the principal sugar-producing part of the Colony) by the Government in the matter of railway extension is little short of a public scandal ; and it is in direct consequence of this neglect (the price of long-distance carting over hilly roads being prohibitive) that the farmer is compelled to sell his cane to the nearest factory, whereas were Naparima Usines connected with the Government Railway, as all those north of San Fernando are, there would be free trade instead, and the farmer could sell his canes in the best market, *i.e.*, to the highest bidder, or else to the factory which happens to be able to grind at the time when it is convenient to him to reap them.

The Cipero Tramway is quite useless for the purpose, as it is practically a private concern, and hardly taps the main cane-farming sections at all. In order thoroughly to develop this promising industry, and to establish it on a sound basis throughout the district, it is absolutely necessary (1) that the Government Railway should have "running powers" over the whole of the Cipero track ; (2) that there should be an extension of it (also, of course, under T. G. R. control) east from Princes Town, which would *gradually* feel its way on to the Poole River district ; and (3) that there should be a prolongation of the main line from San Fernando, or from the "Cross," through Palmiste to La Fortunée.

If our Government, in fine, were to pay a little more attention when deciding upon railway extension to the demands of long-settled districts of the Colony, and less to purely speculative incursions into regions of undeveloped Crown-lands, we should have fewer of those recurring deficits with which the General Manager of the railway is periodically wont, in his balance sheets of, for instance, the Caparo Valley line, to harrow our economic feelings.

To return from the abstract to the concrete, it is well known that the carriage of cane upon the Tacarigua and Marabella sections is one of the most lucrative items in the revenue of the Trinidad Government Railways; why, then, not seek to extend it? If it pays to transport farmers' canes 150 miles by railroad in Louisiana (as is constantly done), why should it not pay to transport them 15 miles here? It undoubtedly would; and—where there are railway facilities—*does*. Extend these facilities, and we shall no longer hear the sad plaint of the Savana Grande farmer that "no one will lend him a shilling on a crop which has no longer a market," while there exists within 10 miles of him at least one factory—situated metaphorically between the devil and the deep sea—capable of taking, and anxious to obtain, 1,000 to 1,500 tons of cane, weekly, more than it is receiving.

### III

#### ADDRESS TO ESTATE EMPLOYEES

(*Easter Day, 7th April 1901*)

MY FRIENDS,—I have had much pleasure in acceding to the request of several members of this congregation that I should meet you here as on the occasion of my last visit to the island; and I chose to-day, because it is my last Sunday before I leave the Colony to return to England.

Standing as we do on the threshold of a new century of the Christian era, as well as of a new reign, there are many subjects which may cause us to pause and think for a little; but I have not come here to preach, or to teach, but simply to say a few words to you upon a subject which interests you all, namely, the Estate itself.

The present year, 1901, completes a period of eighty years during which this Estate of Canaan has been in the possession of my family. It was purchased by my great-uncle in 1821, and the estate work was then performed entirely by negro slaves. In 1833 slavery was abolished, and the slaves became, in consequence, free men. Great difficulties were experienced in working estates, until the plan of introducing immigrants from India under the indenture system was brought into operation. In

1850 my great-uncle died, and my father succeeded to the estates, and has therefore just completed his jubilee as their proprietor.

Muscovado sugar continued to be made on each separate estate to 1883, when, owing to the great fall in the price of that product, it was deemed advisable to erect the present central Usine at Palmiste.

I myself came out for the first time in 1889, and since then I have continued to take a very close interest in the management of the estates. This period, I regret to say, has been coincident with one of severe depression in the sugar trade, and out of the last twelve crops seven have resulted in a loss, and only five in a gain, the total loss largely exceeding the total gain. Economy has been introduced in every way. Salaries in many cases have been reduced, and I must take this opportunity of thanking you all, not only those present, but those outside, for the cheerful way in which you have acquiesced in whatever reductions we have been compelled to introduce.

Had circumstances been more propitious, I should have liked to mark this eightieth year of our proprietorship, this fiftieth year of my father's ownership, by the commencement of some work of a nature urgently needed. One is the provision of better houses for the people, and the other is the provision of a better and purer water supply, both of which have long been near my heart; but I regret to say that under present conditions, and with the prospect of another severe loss this year, owing to the bad prices, it is impossible even to begin to carry out these works. I can promise,

however, that when better times come, I shall not lose sight of them.

One event will mark this year in the history of the estate, the fact that during the current year all the remaining indentured immigrants on these estates will become free. And I, for one, am quite certain that if the feeling between proprietor, staff, and people remains as friendly and as cordial in the future as it has been in the past, then we shall get on as well without indentured immigrants as other people do with them.

Towards one other matter I have also been able to make some progress, though I am not able to state definitely that the work will be undertaken. I refer to the possibility of our having a direct road from San Fernando to the south, which would run through Palmiste and Canaan by means of a bridge near the mouth of the river Cipero. As you all know, His Excellency the Governor himself came to see the proposed route, and the matter is now under his consideration. If the road is made, it will, in my opinion, be of great value to all the people on this estate, as giving them a short and direct road to San Fernando for their marketing.

You will remember perhaps, some of you, that I referred in my speech last year to the hope I entertained that the Canadian Presbyterian Mission might see its way to erect a Church here in Canaan, as a central place of worship for the people of these estates. Dr Grant, however, informs me that consideration of the matter has been postponed pending the settlement of this question of the road ; for if the road is made, Canaan would thereby be brought much nearer to San Fernando, and people

could more easily attend service at Susumachar Church. If, however, the road is not made, I hope that Dr Grant will use his influence with the authorities in Canada, with a view to raising part of the money needful for this worthy object.

In one other way I intend to mark this day. When I was inspecting the school here not long ago, I was shocked to find that although the children could sing many songs, and sing them well, yet they could not sing our National Anthem, "God save the King;" and I have no doubt that they are in equal ignorance as to our National Flag. Now, it has long been a custom in the schools of America for the children to be taught their National Anthem, and also for the National Flag of the United States to fly over all public buildings, or educational institutions, and in this point I think we may learn from America with advantage. I therefore requested Dr Grant to give instructions for the children to be taught the National Anthem, and I now intend to present Canaan School with this flag, the Union Jack, the emblem of the British Empire, to be flown at the mast-head whenever the school is in session. The history of the flag is not a little interesting; the white cross on a blue ground was originally the flag of Scotland, and when King James VI. succeeded to the English throne he added to it the upright red cross of the banner of that Kingdom, and, finally in 1801, the second red cross was added on the Union with Ireland. That is the history of the Union Jack, which is now the symbol of the whole British Empire. I hope, therefore, that whenever you see it floating here you will remember not only

this day, but also that all of us, from whatever quarter of the globe we, or our fathers, may have come, are subjects of the same sovereign, King Edward, just as all of us who have worshipped to-day in this school are subjects of the same Lord and Master above.

At the conclusion of the proceedings, Mr Lamont ran the Union Jack up to the top of a flagstaff erected the day before, and "God save the King" was sung, led by Mrs Lamont of Knockdow.

The people, who numbered about 200, were deeply interested in the events of the day.

## IV

### THE WEST INDIES: A WARNING AND A WAY

*(Reprinted from the Empire Review of August 1902)*

#### A WARNING

THAT the abolition of the sugar bounties, by the spontaneous action of the bounty-giving powers, is eminently desirable, no one but a jam-maker is likely to deny. Whether that abolition means immediate prosperity to the West Indian sugar industry is another question. Behind the great barrier of the bounties other obstacles to prosperity have sprung up unnoticed. The West Indian sugar industry is suffering not only from the effects of the bounties, but from a deep-seated internal disease.

The proprietors of the great estates in Demerara and Trinidad have, as a rule, faced the situation courageously, and spent money freely upon successive improvements in machinery, until at present the best sugar factories of either of these Colonies compare not unfavourably, so far as the heavy machinery goes, with those of any country in the world. Unfortunately, however, there has been no corresponding improvement in the management of that machinery or in the manipulation of the juice. In many West Indian sugar houses that important officer, a chemist, is absent; while in others he

merely accumulates a mass of figures and statistics, which are not turned to any practical account by the manager: in other words, a mere laboratory record usurps the place of "true chemical control." There is frequently a lamentable want of co-ordination between the different departments of the factory; the economy of labour and the adoption of the numerous small labour-saving devices noticeable in an American sugar-house have hardly begun to be seriously studied; and the consideration that only a small minority of the factories work continuously night and day is a proof that the majority are either only working up to half their maximum capacity, or else with twice the necessary amount of capital invested in machinery. The result is that few factories obtain more than 200 lbs. of sugar from 2,240 lbs. of cane; while it is not too much to say that 240 lbs. or even 250 lbs. could be obtained if there were any practical chemical control involving an exact computation, not only of the percentage, but of the actual number of pounds of sucrose contained in the cane, the juice, the syrup, the massecuite, the various grades of sugar, the filter press cakes, and the offal crop of molasses. In this way alone is it possible to compare the number of pounds of sugar coming into the factory in the form of cane with the number actually marketed, and to ascertain readily at what point in the process of manufacture preventible losses occur.

I turn to the field. Here the case is still more deplorable. The system of agriculture is practically the same that prevailed on the islands in the early days of last century. Except in a few localities, the various operations incident to the preparation and

tillage of the soil are all performed by hand at enormous cost, and if a visitor hints that there exist such implements as the plough, the cultivator, the horse-hoe, and the harrow, he is informed that their use is unsuitable to the soil or the climate (as twenty-five years ago the vacuum pan was alleged to be) ; that the tropical rains would carry the soil down the furrows into the sea (is there not such a thing as contour-ploughing with reversible mould-board ploughs?) ; that these stiff soils would be very difficult to plough (the more reason for thoroughly disintegrating them) ; that the operation could only be performed in the dry season, when all animals are required for hauling cane (possibly true, but would not the enormous saving in labour more than pay for the maintenance of a larger stock of mules or oxen?) ; or that the labourers are ignorant of the use of these implements ! (why can they not be taught ?)

The fact is, that such a revolution as the introduction of agricultural implements connotes, violates two of the conditions necessary to enlisting in its support the active cordial assistance of the manager and his staff; it would entail a comparatively insignificant outlay of money, and therefore fail to appeal to their sense of the grandiose ; and it would necessitate sustained endeavour along new lines, not only in learning and instructing their labourers in the use of these strange and unknown utensils, but in entirely remodelling their time-honoured system of "drains" and "beds," which would appeal very strongly to their sense of the troublesome.

"Rotation of crops," as generally understood, is

scarcely practicable on a sugar plantation, but there is, therefore, the more urgent need for the growth (at least, once every three years) of a restorative leguminous crop, which might either be "turned under," or used as stock feed. Nevertheless, this practice of "green crop manuring" is, except perhaps in the Leeward Islands, more generally honoured in the breach than in the observance throughout the West Indies.

Long before the creation of the Imperial Department of Agriculture, seedling canes and other new varieties were being experimentally cultivated on many estates. No cane has, however, been produced as yet which has continuously given, over a large number of different soils and seasons, a greater tonnage of cane per acre, or higher saccharine contents, than the ordinary Bourbon and White Transparent varieties.

It is perhaps in the vital matter of the application of chemical fertilisers to the soil that there is room for the greatest improvement. At present they are usually applied in an utterly haphazard manner. Instead of the application to each field (or, indeed, to different parts of a field) of a dressing, nicely calculated, both in quantity and quality, to its requirements as revealed by a careful analysis of the soil, in nine cases out of ten a fixed amount per acre of somebody's "patent cane-fertiliser" is applied indiscriminately, year after year, over an entire estate, possibly (and perhaps wisely) without regard to even the one solitary soil-analysis that may have been made somewhere in the district ten or fifteen years before.

It is by no means impossible that a judiciously

increased application of chemical manure might, in some cases, result in a crop of almost as many tons of sugar per acre as is now produced of cane. This is literally achieved in the Hawaiian Islands, where it is not infrequent to expend as much as £8 per acre in artificial manures, or to reap a crop of 9 tons of sugar from the same area over a whole estate, while 14 tons per acre have been obtained over a single field. In the British West Indies an indiscriminate expenditure of, say, 30s. to £2 per acre, produces a crop of 18 tons of cane, or about  $1\frac{3}{4}$  tons of sugar.

And even if the West Indian planter were to expend £8 per acre on chemical fertilisers, it is probable that his yield of sugar would be little, if any, better than at present, because he is unable, with his methods of tillage by hand, ever (except in those parts of Barbados and the Leeward Islands where implements are used) to get the soil into that supreme condition of tilth which alone can enable it most advantageously to take up, to retain, and to distribute the fertiliser to the growing plant. There is, in fact, no perception whatever of the central idea of modern intensive cultivation, viz., that the soil is only a sort of menstruum in which are to be placed the exact quantities of nitrogen, potash, lime, and phosphoric acid, which will be removed from that soil by a crop of almost any desired magnitude. In carrying this theory into practice, it is, of course, of great importance to ascertain periodically the exact chemical condition of each field, as indicating in what quantity, proportion, and state of solubility the four great elements of plant food ought to be added to the soil, in order to render available for

the growing crop the amount of those elements which, it is estimated, will be contained in the desiderated tonnage of cane at harvesting. That these elements may be taken up without unnecessary loss, the point of vital importance is the perfect mechanical condition of the soil. Hardly, if at all, less important is the steady supply of the requisite amount of water to the growing cane; but irrigation is another point in intensive cultivation which has been grossly neglected in the West Indies. To irrigation, however, to the higher proportion of "plant" canes to "ratoons," and to the large and discriminating applications of chemical fertilisers, is due the gigantic yield of the Hawaiian soils above noticed, quite as much as to their extreme depth and fine natural tilth. But, apart from these altogether extraordinary soils, the average production of the whole of the Hawaiian sugar lands is no less than 4 tons of sugar per acre; in the British West Indies about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  tons. Yet the West Indian will assert that this contrast is entirely due to the superior soil of Hawaii. I incline rather to the belief that the results could be transposed by transposing the men and their methods. I am fully aware that one or two of these methods (use of implements, irrigation, green crop manuring, less ratooning, and really scientific fertilisation of the soil) may occasionally be found in vogue on individual West Indian estates, but I do not know of a single instance where all are systematically employed.

The West Indian backwardness is directly due to two causes; first, the abundance of labourers, working for a low wage; secondly, the extreme rarity of skilled scientific direction. It is the

abundance of labour that has stunted the desire for, and the adoption of, labour-saving appliances, both in the field and in the factory ; and if this criticism be true of Barbados, where there is the really cheap labour provided by its teeming population of negroes working for 8d. or 9d. a day, it is no less true of Demerara and Trinidad, where a more deceptive state of affairs prevails, in that the labour is only *apparently* cheap, for, if to the average daily wage of 25 cents (1s. 0½d.) be added the cost of immigration and the various items, such as hospitals, connected therewith, coolie labour is the very reverse of cheap. Still, India provides an inexhaustible source of supply, the actual rate of wages is low, and the great obstacle of the bounties has distracted planters' attention from all other impediments on the path to industrial salvation.

Compare this with Louisiana ; the sugar of that state has, it is true, the very heavy protection of over three farthings per pound, as against West Indian sugar of the same grade ("96% centrifugals") in the American market ; but as against this there are to be set the facts that it has only a nine months' growing season, instead of fifteen or eighteen ; that both the young cane in February and the ripe cane in November or December are liable to grave damage from the not infrequent frosts ; that the cane never fully matures in that climate, with the consequence that the juice cannot compare with that of the West Indies either in purity or percentage of sucrose ; and, finally, that the rate of wages varies from 75 cents a day during the spring and summer to \$1.50 a day during grinding, or from three to six times the amount of the West Indian wage. Yet

the very fact of this high rate of wages has compelled Louisiana planters to adopt every labour-saving device conceivable, with the solitary exception of the still uninvented cane-reaper. If some economic cataclysm could suddenly double the rate of wages in the West Indies, or halve the working population, it might be possible to save the sugar industry in spite of itself.

In the Island of Trinidad this labour question is complicated by the amazing method of raising the fund for the importation of East Indian labour, which amounts to an immense sum every year. One-third of this sum is contributed from the general revenue, and two-thirds are levied on the sugar and cacao planters. Take the year 1900, for instance : the total cost of immigration amounted to £48,257, of which £16,085 was charged in general revenue. Of their share of two-thirds (actually £35,518, that is, including a balance of over £3,000 to 1901) the planters contributed £9,692 by a fee of £1 a head on each indentured coolie, payable directly by his employer. But the astounding feature is this, that the planters must contribute the balance of £25,826 by taxation, not upon the coolies imported, but upon the tonnage of produce exported.

The effects of this glaring injustice are threefold. First, it falls with especial severity upon the numerous small cacao planters, nine-tenths of whom never employed an indentured coolie in their lives, and who already contribute their share to the cost of the time-expired coolies whom they may employ, through their contribution to the third payable out of general revenue. Secondly, it compels the continual importation of indentured labour, even to those parts of

the Colony which are already thickly populated and fully settled ; for why should a planter discontinue his application for immigrants if the export tax is still levied upon him, to pay for the immigrants whom other planters are importing ? Thirdly, this method of raising the immigration fund is a direct premium upon bad management, for, so long as it continues, those planters who, for obvious reasons are unable to retain their time-expired coolies on their estates, can replace them continually by fresh importations at other people's expense.

The second cause of the West Indian backwardness is due to the fact that the planters have endeavoured to continue the fight against all the scientists and specialists of Continental Europe and the United States with a class of men whose technical knowledge is hopelessly inadequate. That there are among the higher ranks a few outstanding exceptions let me at once admit ; that even those who do not come under the category of exceptions have, one and all, striven honestly and painstakingly, according to their lights, no one would deny ; but it is of no use to blink the fact that the time has gone by when you could take a raw lad from England and straightway set him as an overseer in charge of 500 or 1,000 acres of land, to direct what ought to be the most scientifically conducted of all cultivations. Even a man with technical knowledge far greater than that of the ordinary overseer could scarcely apply it, because his whole time and attention must be devoted to shepherding the vast flocks of men, women, and children, who laboriously and imperfectly "fork," in the course of weeks, an area which a few good mule-teams could plough in as

many days ; and as for the overseer whose technical training is nil, and whose knowledge is purely empirical, he either wisely lets the labourers work on in their accustomed way, or else buys his experience at the price of his experiments, a price which is apt to be a considerable one—to his employer.

Still less is it advisable to give an untrained man charge of a factory containing £50,000 worth of new and complicated machinery. This statement may seem a truism, but dozens of such appointments have been made in cases where a central factory has been erected to supersede half-a-dozen old-time muscovado houses ; the machinery, the methods of manufacture, and the grade of sugar to be produced, all being totally different. The master of an Athenian trireme could hardly be more out of place on the bridge of an Atlantic liner. At the same time, it is only just to confess that the muscovado man always did his best to overcome the inherent difficulties of the position of having to teach to 80 or 100 hands a business which he himself did not understand.

To this it is a valid reply to say that in 1870 or 1880 the promotion of the muscovado manager was inevitable, because at that period few trained sugar experts existed in any part of the world. But it is not valid as regards to-day ; ample time has elapsed for the evolution of the sugar expert in other countries ; in the British West Indies alone, individuals distinctly belonging to the species are so scarce that it may be pronounced of merely sporadic occurrence. It is a hard saying, but true beyond a doubt, that if the West Indian sugar industry be

not to perish utterly, the men of the old regime must go.

And by whom are their places to be filled? Why is it that among young men born and bred in the West Indies, and therefore acclimatised, we see no competition for positions of trust on the sugar plantations or in the sugar factories? No one who knows them would assert that they are without ambition, the capacity for hard work, or intelligence of a high order. It is not that the salaries, low as they are, are insufficiently attractive, for we see these same young men working as clerks in a Government office, or a merchant's warehouse, for half the remuneration of even an overseer. Above all, we see them, battalions of them, pouring into the legal and medical professions; into the latter indeed to such an extent that in Trinidad the medical department has been so swollen to provide places for them, that its cost is no less than £67,326, out of a total expenditure of £659,079.

All this is utterly wrong; the youth of the West Indies must be given facilities for a wider range of choice of occupation. I have said that you cannot successfully conduct the sugar (or any other) industry of the West Indies without trained intelligences; I will say more, you cannot conduct it without trained West Indian intelligences. You cannot permanently conduct a great industry on the principle of Uitlanderism. To be of enduring value in Empire-building, this industry must be directed by West Indian brains, worked by West Indian labour, and, I hope, ultimately financed by West Indian capital. The Hawaiian sugar industry, with all its apparent prosperity, is fundamentally

unsound, and the gigantic preponderance of males among its heterogeneous population of imported labourers, which is now its triumph song, will be its epitaph.

#### A WAY

During the last few years, thanks to the Imperial Department of Agriculture, there has dawned in upon the West Indian Governments a glimmering appreciation of the fact that agricultural education of some sort is advisable; and, accordingly, two or three secondary agricultural schools have been started; and even the children in the elementary schools are now being taught to spell words and to write copy-book headings bearing on agricultural subjects; while their teachers are occasionally given facilities for attending agricultural lectures. Quite right; by all means let us endeavour to create a class of labourers who will "work with their heads as well as with their hands"; but it will take centuries to evolve experts in this way, and meanwhile Rome is burning. At the other end of the educational scale, also, a beginning must be made.

The crying need of the West Indian colonies is a University of Tropical Agriculture. It is an imperative necessity that their young men should be trained to take part in building up the future of their country upon the only substantial foundation, and in making their agriculture an example instead of a byword; for in agriculture alone lies the promise of any possible permanent prosperity for these "British Dominions beyond the seas."

The recently-constituted Imperial Department of Agriculture is admirable, so far as it goes, and would form an excellent nucleus for such a university as I propose, just as Dr Morris would form an ideal head. At present, however, the work of the Department is largely thrown away. No number of agricultural conferences will conquer the innate conservatism of the West Indian planter, nor pamphlets uproot his prejudices. The only way of introducing improved methods is by irrigating the West Indies with a constant stream of men, thoroughly imbued with the best and latest theory, and equally acquainted with its practice : men who will not merely advise in passing, but who will take up appointments in the various islands, and, by the superiority of their achievements, convince their old-fashioned neighbours of the efficacy of their methods.

To return : the initial cost of establishing the university and its current expenses should be shared by the various colonies, each contributing according to its ability ; and if this rendered necessary the sacrifice of a few doctors, the health of the body politic would not suffer from absorbing a little less medicine and a little more chemistry. The teaching staff should be composed of absolutely first-rate men in every department, and the curriculum should include agriculture, chemistry, agricultural chemistry, civil and mechanical engineering (including a special department for railway work), with shopwork and drawing, forestry, botany, veterinary science, entomology, horticulture, geology, physics, and, last but not least, commerce.

The teaching of these subjects should be so

distributed as to render possible at least five different courses ; I mean a sugar course, a commercial course, a cacao course, a course of tropical horticulture, and a course of forestry—that poor, sad, ever-neglected Cinderella of the sciences. In all of these, degrees should be conferred. Naturally, the different courses would frequently overlap, and, while none of them should last for less than four or more than five years, still, permission might be given to attend the university for any complete session, or number of sessions, to enable older men (who could not spare time for the whole course) to enhance at once their knowledge of any particular subject and the value of their services.

All tuition should be entirely free : but, in order to prevent bad influence and waste of the professors' time, resulting from the presence of all and sundry comers, it would be advisable that all intending students should be of not less than seventeen years of age, and required to pass a tolerably searching examination, not only before entrance, but at the close of each year's session (which should be of nine months' duration, from October 1st to July 1st). This would effect the very necessary economy of keeping out mere idlers, and of insuring the periodic rejection of students whose brain power was insufficient to enable them to assimilate further knowledge. Inducements should be offered to existing West Indian colleges to prepare boys specially for the university, but they must not be permitted to paralyse its usefulness by compelling the inclusion of subjects more fitted for the entrance examination of a mediæval monastery than of a modern college. Greek, Latin, and Euclid should

be rigorously eschewed in the entrance examination of a West Indian university ; it would, of course, include English, French, mathematics, geography, and whatever else might be deemed expedient by the governing body.

It would be necessary to acquire in an accessible part of Barbados an estate of not more than one hundred acres upon which to erect the requisite buildings, consisting of lecture rooms, laboratories, professors' houses, college, with separate apartment for each student, dining-hall, and common rooms, swimming bath and gymnasium. The board and lodging, if plain but good, might well be covered by a charge of £2, 2s. per month per head ; medical attendance, text-books, chemical appliances, etc., to be paid for as required.

For the sugar course to be of any practical value, it would be absolutely necessary that at least fifty acres of the estate should be devoted to an experimental station, upon which the most modern system of cane culture, in all its branches, would be demonstrated, and still further improvements attempted ; and upon it should be erected a sugar factory capable of dealing with two or three tons of cane per hour ; but, although so small, completely equipped with mechanical apparatus for loading the cane-carrier ; "crusher" ; six or nine roller mill (with an alternative diffusion battery) ; triple effect ; vacuum pan ; centrifugal machine ; apparatus for crystallisation in movement ; forced draught furnaces ; machines for weighing cane, juice, megass, and sugar ; filtration plant, etc., all of the most approved type, and fitted with all modern accessories for the economy of labour. The erection of this

factory need not be commenced until a year or two after the university has opened its doors to its first students; for it would not be until they had had three years of preparation in the lecture-room, the laboratory, the workshop, and the field, that the students would be considered ready to turn their attention to practical sugar-house work.

The factory would be under the special control of a "superintendent," and would be entirely manned by students in the fourth and fifth years of the sugar course, a group of them being allocated to each department, and each individual student to a particular place therein. At this place he would remain, making a minute daily analytical report of his work, until thoroughly conversant with it, when the superintendent would promote him to the next place: and so on, throughout each department of the factory. This would continue during the three or four months of the grinding season.

Similarly, the students of cacao culture, fruit culture, and forestry would spend a great part of the two final years of their course in learning the practical application of their knowledge. If, therefore, on account of its central position and bracing climate, a site in Barbados were chosen for the university and sugar-school, it would still be imperative to provide experimental stations situated where these other industries could be practised and taught. The existing botanic stations might easily be adapted to this purpose, and affiliated to the university. It would be advantageous that each station so affiliated should specialise in the subject most suited to the locality; for instance, fruit culture might be studied at the Jamaica station, forestry

in Trinidad, cacao in Grenada or Trinidad, and stock-breeding either in Jamaica or Tobago.

There would appear to be no cause to apprehend any religious difficulty in connection with a university such as I have sketched. For, although in the West Indies religious questions have been known to arouse considerable animation, if not animosity, yet, since neither theology nor history would be included in the curriculum, it might safely be left to a conference of representative clergymen of the various denominations to make provision for the spiritual welfare of the students belonging to their respective flocks. I see no reason to doubt that graduates of such a university would leave it fully equipped for the battle of life, competent to take charge of any department of the work of any sugar plantation, and able to command salaries representing remarkably high interest upon the national capital invested in their education. At any rate, in almost all other sugar-producing countries men so trained are employed, and it is sheer lunacy for West Indian proprietors to expect to command success by pitting against them even the brightest boys from a British board-school.

The abolition of the bounties will doubtless restore that confidence in our Colonial sugar industry which alone can bring about the much-needed influx of fresh energy and fresh capital; but, unless this education question is also settled, it is safe to predict that the successful agitation against the bounties will merely prove the precursor of a further demand for protection itself.

Failing the immediate solution of this urgent problem, there is still a course open to the West

Indian proprietor who is not content to persist in methods of (agricultural) barbarism until he is ruined; and there is a course open to the West Indian parent who does not consider that the over-crowded medical and legal professions promise a successful career to his son. Neither can be suggested by a British subject without intense humiliation to his national pride; and the fact that such suggestions are not only possible, but necessary, is calculated to arouse even the most self-satisfied "Britisher" from his lethargic complacency. The proprietor may officer his plantation with trained American men; and the parent may send his son to receive from American charity that superlative technical education freely offered to all comers, of whatsoever nationality, by the State University of Louisiana, to whose gifted professor of agriculture I am very deeply indebted, not only for valuable information placed at my disposal, but for the facilities given me for studying, on the spot, the working of that admirable sugar school over which he presides.

A very large proportion of West Indian exports goes to the United States; West Indian imports (notably machinery) are increasingly coming thence. If West Indian estates are to be managed by citizens of, or by men educated in, the great Republic, another link will be broken in the chain binding these colonies to the British Empire. No British statesman can afford to regard such a contingency with equanimity.

For the solution of these vital West Indian problems, I appeal to the business instinct of the people of this country, and to the ever-watchful alertness of the distinguished statesman who

presides over the destinies of our Colonies. Mr Chamberlain has won for himself in the hearts and minds of the West Indian people a place occupied by none of his predecessors at the Colonial Office; and I predict with confidence that if, out of the germ of his "Imperial Department of Agriculture" he evolves an agricultural, mechanical, and commercial university, he will not only restore a large measure of prosperity to the West Indies, but immeasurably strengthen the bonds that unite them to the Mother Country.

## V

### THE WEST INDIES IN POLITICS

(*A Speech delivered at Rothesay, 22nd December 1902*)

WHEN I was last in Rothesay, about ten days ago, someone informed me that two of the local papers were displaying an almost morbid curiosity to learn my views upon the West Indian question. Now, I do not believe that it is, as a rule, wise to pander to the inquisitive, because theirs is an appetite prone to increase with the eating, and to develop into an altogether unhealthy craving. Still, on the present occasion, I feel impelled to gratify their desire; and, moreover, when you are so kind as to give me this magnificent "send-off" on my departure to the West Indies, I cannot but think it a fitting opportunity for giving you my opinion on a few of the outstanding political problems that affect, or afflict, the Colonies to which I am going. It must have often struck you as singular that one so seldom hears the West Indies discussed either in the House of Commons or on the platform in the country. That, I think, is due to three causes. In the first place, remarkably few politicians know anything whatever about West Indian affairs; in the second place, the congestion of public business prevents the discussion of this and

other important questions ; and in the third place, an impression has got abroad that the whole West Indian problem is summed up in the question of sugar bounties, and that with one's approval or disapproval of the remedy of countervailing duties the matter ends. Now, that is altogether a mistake. We are all Imperialists now—if we are allowed to define the word ourselves—and the point I wish to bring home to you is this, that the good government and prosperity of the Colonies are just as much matters for the solicitude and attention of the electors of this country as are the good government and prosperity of this country itself. And if this is true of our great self-governing Colonies, such as Canada and Australia, it is even more true of our Crown Colonies, which have few or no representative institutions, and therefore no voice whatever in matters deeply concerning their own welfare. It is, therefore, the electors of this country who directly control the government of these Colonies by means of those they send to the Colonial Office, and the policy pursued there. For twenty years past the condition of the West Indies has gone steadily from bad to worse. A Royal Commission was appointed in 1884, which made certain excellent recommendations, but nothing came of them. Another Commission was appointed in 1897, which made various recommendations with regard to the establishment of an Imperial Department of Agriculture for the West Indies, with numerous affiliated botanic stations ; loans of money for the erection of central factories ; grants for subsidising certain lines of steamers ; and doles to the planters. Most of these remedies were applied, and

the condition of the West Indies is very little better than before—the West Indies remain, like Ireland and South Africa, a noteworthy exception to the general rule that prosperity follows the British flag, a black blot on the scutcheon of British rule, brought out into stronger relief by its success in Australia, Canada, and, upon different lines, in Egypt and India. The white population is diminishing in ratio to the black, trade languishes, and capital shows remarkable reluctance to flow into the West Indies. That is the state of affairs now. Now, what are the remedies? I want, first of all, to read you a suggested remedy from a London paper:—

To THE EDITOR

SIR,—As you are opening your columns to letters relative to the means of raising the money required by the country, I would suggest the sale of all our West Indian Possessions, including the Bahamas and Demerara, to our American Cousins. It would be to the immense advantage of the Possessions themselves, as the whole of the United States would receive their exports free, and their market would be close at hand. It would relieve our country from a vast expenditure of money, Governors, and Naval and Military Establishments, etc., and rid us of countries perfectly useless for our white population.

We should be only following the wise example of France in selling Louisiana in 1812, and Russia in selling Alaska in 1867.—I am, Sir, your obedient Servant,

CAPTAIN, R.N.

Now, it would be almost superfluous for me to say that this letter is presumably from a Conservative, even had it not appeared in the columns of the

*Standard*, the great Tory organ which few Liberals read and none indite letters to. In spite of all their boasted monopoly of Imperialism, the Tories invariably view our Colonies from the point of £ s. d., and, because the West Indies don't happen to pay, this Captain, R.N., would be perfectly ready to scuttle out of them just as Lord Salisbury scuttled out of Heligoland, without even consulting the inhabitants. It is perfectly true that prosperity would follow immediately upon the annexation of the British West Indies to the United States, just as it has done in the case of Puerto Rico. Capital is just pouring into Puerto Rico, which, for its size, has made more progress during the last four years than any other country in the world. But, in spite of the fact that the British West Indies know that prosperity would follow annexation to the United States, there is absolutely no wish for such a thing—they would not submit to it for a moment—it is a case of "Britain, with all thy faults, we love thee still." And the coloured races know perfectly well that they have infinitely more freedom and a better position under the Union Jack than they would have under the Stars and Stripes. Further, I hold that prosperity can be equally attained under our own flag if only we go the right way about it. First, let me explain a little about these islands.

With the exception of Jamaica and Trinidad, which are about equal in area to Inverness-shire and Sutherland, with populations of roughly three-quarters and one-quarter of a million respectively ; each of our other islands is on an average just about equal in size to this county of Bute, with about three times its population ; save Barbados, which

is very densely populated. But, instead of being under the mild and benignant sway of a Sheriff, a Provost, and a Convener, each unfortunate island, or group of islands, is saddled with the upkeep of a Governor, Chief-Judge, Attorney-General, Solicitor-General, Receiver-General, and an untold host of minor officials, whose combined salaries mount up to anything from £25,000 to £125,000 a year. Not only that, but the West Indian Islands have all surrounded themselves with a wall of tariffs, imposed quite impartially against foreign countries, against the United Kingdom, and against one another. As the extreme ends of the chain of islands are not 400 miles apart, you can imagine the absurdity of it. If you here in Bute were to impose a customs tariff upon almost every conceivable article of commerce, whether from abroad, from the mainland, or from Arran and Cumbrae, do you suppose that the honour and glory of any number of Governors and Attorney-Generals would compensate you for the injury that that would do to your trade? Then the system of grants and doles going on for the last few years is utterly wrong; you will never set the sugar industry, or any other industry, on its feet by grants and doles; they only pauperise it, and do no permanent good whatever. And you will never have the West Indies effectively served with a good service of steamers until you pay for the carriage of mails as you pay for any other freight, viz., by bulk and by weight, and withdraw all this costly system of mail-subsidies. The Royal Mail Steam Packet Company gets a subsidy of £80,000 a year, the West-Indian-Canadian Line £27,000, and the new line from

Bristol £40,000, the only result being that the lines neglect their freight, neglect their passengers, and keep unsubsidised lines out of the field altogether.

I should like to warn you against the rubbish we have been reading in the papers lately about our shipping being driven out of the market by foreign subsidies. That is precisely the reverse of the truth. With the solitary exception of France, we are ourselves the worst offenders in this matter. The following figures are from the recent blue book on shipping subsidies:—France gives annually for such subsidies, £1,787,000, Great Britain £1,003,000, Germany £440,000, United States £346,000. And note this, that almost the whole of the small German subsidies are paid to their lines to the East, to Australia, China and East Africa, and not to their lines on the Atlantic, where we are feeling their keen competition. The medicine that the West Indies need is a good dose of Free Trade:—Free Trade at once among themselves, and as soon as may be with the great sister Colony on the north—the Dominion of Canada. But you will never get this so long as almost every islet is an independent unit. They must be united into one great Colony with a Cromer or a Curzon at the head of it, advised by a council of the best men we can send out. Sweep away those hosts of minor posts, so dear to the heart of the Colonial Office for the purpose of patronage, and you will be able to pay better salaries and attract better men. Sweep away the doles and grants and arrange a common tariff for the whole group. That is at present precluded by local jealousies. Trade would then increase, and the federated Colony would be big enough to

arrange reciprocity treaties with Canada or the United States, a task impossible for a score of separate little islands. And the voice of a unified West India would carry far more weight in the Councils of the Empire.

In such a system the Governor-General in Council should have control of all matters common to the whole group; while there would be this advantage that it might be possible to delegate the local matters of each island to local elective assemblies. This is impossible without some supervising central authority, for with a high franchise, power would be in the hands of an oligarchy of planters and merchants, while a low franchise would enable the coloured vote to swamp the whites by at least eleven to one.

And do you know what is the usual objection to the scheme of unification? This, that it is not feasible, because the islands are scattered over a considerable expanse of sea, and that it would therefore be necessary to provide the Governor-General with a yacht! I should have thought that to the first maritime power in the world the calm tropical sea would not so much separate the islands as provide a cheap and easy means of communication among them. Another point should be noticed in dealing with the requirements for West Indian prosperity —there is an absolute lack of sound commercial, technical, or agricultural education. Somebody said to me the other day that I had agricultural education on the brain, but if I haven't it on the brain, I do not know on what other part of my person I could carry it. The present colleges there are very good in their way, but they devote themselves almost

entirely to the literary and classical side of education, with the result that their pupils inevitably become lawyers or doctors, the consequence being that these professions are absolutely glutted. Most of the doctors, in addition to their practice, get salaries from the State—the others eke out a precarious existence by physicking one another. Well, it is dawning gradually upon the authorities that some sort of technical education is necessary, and in the elementary schools some rudimentary agricultural instruction is given. But there must be a proper system of technical education, not only in secondary schools, but also in a West Indian university. There must be a sound system of agricultural and commercial education from top to bottom of the educational ladder, for in the larger development of agriculture and commerce alone lies the salvation of the West Indies. I have kept you far too long, but the point I wish to impress upon you is that Liberal principles are applicable all the world over, and that it is only by the application to the West Indian problem of these principles, modified as circumstances require, that these Colonies will ever be made a strength instead of a weakness to the Empire.

## VI

### MR CHAMBERLAIN'S SCHEME AS IT WOULD AFFECT THE WEST INDIES

(*A Lecture delivered at the Victoria Institute, Port-of-Spain,  
8th April 1904*)

I SHOULD like, in the first place, to thank you for inviting me to address you. The list of those who have lectured before the Victoria Institute contains so many distinguished names that I regard it as indeed a privilege to have my name added to the number. I was surprised when it was suggested to me that I should take for the title of my subject "Mr Chamberlain's Scheme as it would affect the West Indies," because Mr Chamberlain's scheme, as he expounded it in the long series of meetings held in the autumn of last year, hardly affects the West Indies or the Crown Colonies at all. There seems to be a general impression here, not, of course, among the members of this scientific institution, but among the general public, that Mr Chamberlain's scheme promises affluence to everyone in the West Indies, by the imposition of an almost prohibitive tariff upon all imports into the United Kingdom, with a marked preference in favour of the colonies, which would give the colonial producer the whole

benefit of that preference. Now, I need scarcely point out that, however attractive such a scheme of all-round preference may seem, it is not in the least what Mr Chamberlain proposes. Perhaps it would be well for me to recapitulate the heads of Mr Chamberlain's scheme in order that we may know exactly what we are talking about. On the 6th October, in St Andrew's Hall, Glasgow, Mr Chamberlain opened his campaign, and on that occasion he sketched in very explicit terms the outline of his proposals. They were these: First of all, a tax of 2s. a quarter upon imported foreign corn—wheat, barley, and oats (but not maize), with rather more than a corresponding duty upon imports of flour, in order to give a preference to the British miller. Next, there was to be a tax of 5 per cent. upon imported meat. Here again, there was an exception—bacon. Bacon and maize were excepted, because (Mr Chamberlain explained) they are the principal food stuffs of the poorest classes, especially in Ireland. Then there was a 5 per cent. *ad valorem* duty upon imported dairy produce, a small tax upon foreign fruit, and some preference to Colonial wines. Lastly, a tax averaging 10 per cent. upon imported manufactures. Exports from the West Indies generally to the United Kingdom are not, nor are likely to be in the future, such as to be included under the heading of manufactured goods. I might say in passing, that it is a moot point whether Mr Chamberlain intends this tax to fall upon the whole of the manufactured goods imported into the United Kingdom, or only upon goods coming from foreign countries. It is possible that the point has been left intentionally

obscure. The ablest commentators upon Mr Chamberlain's speeches—and by that I mean those who supply what Mr Chamberlain calls his "commas"—believe that this 10 per cent. is intended to be a general tax upon all imported manufactures, *i.e.*, its purpose is not to give a preference to the Colonies, but protection to British manufactures. In either case, it would have the effect of raising the price of every manufactured article, of which any considerable proportion comes from abroad, to the British consumer, at the rate of two shillings in the pound, and that charge, together with the tax upon food stuffs which I mentioned, would cause a considerable burden to be thrown upon the shoulders of the British consumer. Well, in order that the equilibrium of the British working-man's budget might not be upset, Mr Chamberlain proposed a reduction of certain existing British taxes — namely, those upon tea, coffee, cacao, and sugar. The scheme, taken as a whole, Mr Chamberlain claimed, is of such efficacy, that not only would it avert the impending disruption of the British Empire by binding the wavering loyalty of the Colonies with the golden links of self-interest, but give increased employment at higher wages to every working-man in the United Kingdom. The cost of living, on the other hand, would not be enhanced ; and Mr Chamberlain even went into an elaborate calculation of farthings, in order to show that the artisan might be better off by so much as half a farthing at the end of the week. British agriculture would be once more set on its feet, and British manufactures become more abounding profitably. British imports would be

considerably reduced or totally annihilated, whilst British exports would go up, even beyond those of the *annus mirabilis*, 1872. The United Kingdom might even tax itself into such amazing prosperity that any emigration which might still continue from this Garden of Eden would be attracted to the Colonies instead of to the United States or the Argentine Republic. In a previous speech Mr Chamberlain went so far as to say that the tax on manufactured goods would bring in so large a revenue that a fund would be formed from which an old-age pension could be given to every working-man over sixty-five years of age in the United Kingdom. That proposal met with the somewhat obvious criticism that if Mr Chamberlain's tax were successful in keeping out foreign manufactures, then there would be no fund for old-age pensions, and if it were not successful, then there would be no benefit to the British manufacturer. Whether it was that, or whether it was the witty remark of an Irishman who said, "Faith, they wish to starve us to death whilst we are alive in order to give us old-age pensions after most of us are dead"; from that day to this, nothing more has been heard of old-age pensions. It is no part of our programme to-night to consider whether all, or any, of those numerous promises are likely to be fulfilled, or whether protection would make the United Kingdom an earthly Paradise. We have to discuss the effect of the scheme upon the British West Indies. Under which of the various heads of the scheme would the West Indies benefit? Is the two shilling tax upon imported corn likely to overcome the disadvantages of our tropical climate, and to induce

us to go in for the growing of wheat, barley and oats for the Mother Country? Or will the 5 per cent. upon imported meat, with preference to the Colonies, induce us to raise beef and mutton? It would require more than 5 per cent. to establish a demand for Naparima beef in the London market! Then we come to the proposed tax upon imported dairy produce. Is a preference of 5 per cent. sufficient to induce West Indian agriculturists to make butter and cheese for export to London? I do not think that 5 per cent. would convert Trinidad from an importer into an exporter of dairy produce. Then there is wine. Will the "small preference" be such as to persuade us to go in for wine-growing on a large scale? Is it possible that in the future no London hotel wine-list will be complete without mention of Barbados burgundy or the vintages of St Vincent?

The scheme touches the West Indies on two points only: the preference on fruit and the remission of existing taxation. You may think that even the preference on fruit does not concern Trinidad at the present time. I am of opinion, and have been for a long time—and no one who has followed the rapid rise of the fruit industry in Jamaica, or studied its conditions as reflected in the able and interesting report of Mr W. E. Smith can doubt—that a vast development of the fruit trade will take place in the future throughout the West Indies. The question I would ask you is this, not whether a British preference is necessary in order to render West Indian fruit-farming prosperous, but whether, when the industry can be made so profitable as Mr Smith has shown, when

£1,000 can be earned from one hundred acres of land, it is fair or wise of us to ask the British consumer to pay more for his fruit in order to benefit producers who, by the display of a little energy, can already reap profits so gigantic? It is clear that if the preference is to benefit the producer, it must raise the price to the consumer. There can only be one price for the same article in the same market; therefore, Colonial fruit would rise in price to the consumer by the amount of the duty placed on foreign fruit. A remarkable fact is brought out in the report of a Commission which last year visited the United States with the object of enquiring into the standard of living of the working classes there, into their earnings, their spendings, their rate of wages and their general methods of living, and comparing them with the United Kingdom. The Commission brought out many interesting facts—among them this: that while the cost of many articles of food is greater in the United States than in the United Kingdom, yet, with regard to fruit, the advantages are all the other way, and the workman in the United States has more plentiful and cheaper supplies of fruit than his *confrère* in the United Kingdom. I have it on very high medical authority that the working-man in the United Kingdom does not use nearly enough fruit from the hygienic point of view. And the reason is not very far to seek: it is not to be found in the fiscal policy of either country. The reason lies purely in the more limited range of the British climate, and, if I may say it without being accused of lack of patriotism, of the badness of British weather. The production of fruit is

necessarily more limited in the United Kingdom than in the United States, which comprise half a continent in themselves, and as a result the United Kingdom has to import pears, plums and grapes from France, oranges from Florida, California and Jamaica ; apples from Normandy, from Canada and the United States, and even from far Tasmania ; and bananas from North Africa and Jamaica. If a tax were placed on foreign supplies, their ratio might be diminished relatively to that of the Colonial supplies, but the price would be inevitably raised to the British consumer. I ask you whether it is fair to do that, when already fruit is dearer in the United Kingdom than anywhere else, and when the industry is already reaping preternatural profits. And I ask that because if the price be raised to the consumer it will check the growth of the demand for fruit in which lies the hope of the future, both to the consumer and to the West Indies. Now, fruits, other than the banana, are merely refreshing drinks ; the banana is a nutritious food, and the increasing consumption of them among the working classes of late years is a peculiarly hopeful sign, and in the continuance of that increasing demand lies the prospect of prosperity for the producer here, and the prospect of reversing in the United Kingdom the verdict of that Commission of which I told you. Enlarged supplies of fruit at free-trade prices would stimulate the eating of fruit, and would mean increasing supplies of wholesome fruit to the consumer, and widened markets and greater demand for our products. Of course, you may argue, as Mr Chamberlain sometimes argues, that it is not the

consumer who pays the tax, but the foreign producer. But if it be not the consumer who pays the tax, why did Mr Chamberlain exempt from the proposed taxation the two articles, maize and bacon, on the ground that they are the food of the very poorest classes? If the foreign producer can be made to pay a tax on fruit, by all means make him pay a tax on maize and bacon also. Now, if we are to see a great fruit industry created—as I hope from the bottom of my heart we shall, I trust that it will not be by the artificial method of preferential tariffs, but by the natural method of energy and enterprise. What Jamaica can do, Trinidad can do. Trinidad cannot, it is true, compete with her in the United States. But as Jamaica is three days nearer to the United States, Trinidad is three days nearer to London, and all the preliminaries for developing the fruit trade have been smoothed for us by the initiative of Mr Symington and the investigations of Mr Smith. I hope it will not be at the expense of the British consumer, but through the adoption of the admirable suggestion of Mr Smith, that the industry will be fairly established. The Government of Trinidad should devote 100 acres to the scientific cultivation of bananas for the guidance of intending planters.

Now, I have dwelt thus lengthily upon the fruit question, because I believe it will become of vast importance to the future of the West Indies, and because it is the only point on the positive side of Mr Chamberlain's propaganda which affects the West Indies. It now remains to consider what I may term the negative side of Mr Chamberlain's proposals. In order that the equilibrium of the

British working-man's budget may not be upset, Mr Chamberlain proposes a reduction of existing taxation on tea, coffee, sugar and cacao. Of that part of the scheme, I suppose that every man and every woman in this hall is in entire and absolute favour, but I hope I shall not damp the enthusiasm of anyone when I point out that these remissions are unaccompanied by any preference to the Colonies—that is to say, that German sugar or Demerara sugar, that Guayaquil or Grenada cacao, would enter alike at the reduced rate of duty. It is quite clear, indeed, that if the reduction were only on Colonial produce, the price to the British consumer would be practically unchanged, except perhaps in the case of tea, because Ceylon and Indian tea forms so large a proportion of the total importation that its exemption might fractionally reduce the price. So far, indeed, then, from there being any benefit to the British consumer, there would be an absolute loss, because while the consumer would pay the same as he now pays for coffee and sugar, there would be a loss to the Exchequer of the revenue accruing from Colonial imports, which would have to be made good by the imposition of still further taxation. I am not suggesting for a moment that it would not be delightful for sugar and cacao planters here, if Mr Chamberlain had proposed all-round preference for all Colonial produce, but he did nothing of the sort. In the case of sugar there is the strongest practical reason why Mr Chamberlain did not propose to give preference to the Colonies. It seems to be somewhat forgotten that, by the terms of the Brussels Convention, the Mother Country is

absolutely prohibited from giving any preference to Colonial sugar. And if you say that the Convention only lasts for five years, I reply that supposing that, at the end of that time, the Government in power should denounce the Convention in order to give preference to the sugar colonies, foreign countries would be at liberty to retaliate by the re-imposition of those very bounties from which planters have been striving so long and so patiently to escape. I do not contend that the probable action of Foreign Powers need necessarily influence our action ; I merely point out that we are bound hand and foot by the terms of the Brussels Convention. One of the most hopeful results of the Brussels Convention is the increased consumption of sugar which has already taken place in foreign countries. France, Germany and Austria largely reduced both their import duty and excise duty on sugar, and the result has been a very satisfactory increase in its consumption. You would see the same thing if the tax were reduced in the United Kingdom ; and therefore I am glad to inform you that an intention to reduce the duties on tea, sugar and cacao is not confined to Mr Chamberlain, but is included in the programme of the rival political party.

If there is so little hope from Mr Chamberlain's scheme, the adoption of which becomes more improbable with every successive bye-election, is there nothing to which the West Indies can look forward for the development of their trade, the stimulation of their productive powers, and the attainment of a higher measure of general prosperity ? I believe there is such an alternative policy, but it is to be

sought in the direction of Free Trade, and not in the direction of Protection.

Mr Chamberlain's agitation may have the effect of obliquely benefiting the West Indies by opening discussion upon the state of chaos which at present obtains in their Imperial and Inter-Colonial trade relations. Never can Trinidad attain to that pre-eminent position in trade and commerce to which, by her unique geographical position she is entitled, until she abjures the heresies of a tariff and places her revenue on a Free Trade basis. Prophecies of Trinidad as a Hong Kong of the future, seem to be somewhat far from immediate realisation. It is assumed that it is the tariff of Venezuela that prevents that dream from being realised. I sometimes wonder whether Trinidad's tariff has not as much to do with it. Sir Robert Peel once said that the best weapon for fighting a high tariff was Free Trade. With Trinidad's unrivalled situation, incomparable harbour, and inexhaustible fertility of soil, it needs only the magician's wand of Free Trade for these prophecies to be fulfilled.

Then the reflection that our only Free Trade area is our internal population of 250,000 souls, may well give us food for thought. Whithersoever we may wish to send our products abroad, whether to the Mother Country, or to the other Colonies, or to foreign countries, we are met by a wall of tariffs. Similarly, although we boast a not inconsiderable free list, we insist on taxing ourselves for almost everything we require from the outside world. These are days of big things, and compared with the gigantic internal Free Trade areas of the United States, Germany and the United Kingdom,

a Free Trade area containing only 250,000 souls can hardly be called extensive. Can we do nothing to extend it?

"Free Trade within the Empire" is a phrase which has been heard often within the last ten or fifteen years, and, as a rule, both Protectionists and Free Traders dismiss it with a contemptuous shrug of the shoulder, as if it were some beautiful but unrealisable idea. It is at present unrealisable for two distinct reasons. The first reason is, that the Colonies prefer to raise a considerable portion of their revenue by indirect taxation, and a very large proportion of that indirect taxation falls upon imports coming from the Mother Country. Upon the other hand, the Mother Country insists on raising a not inconsiderable portion of her revenue by taxation of produce coming from the Colonies.

In this connection, two very important points require to be noted: first, that the Colonies are bent on fostering their "infant industries," and so long as they pursue that policy, they are bound to frame their tariffs even more strongly against the Mother Country than against foreign nations, because she, as the principal exporter of manufactured goods, is their chief competitor. My second point is this, that with the exception of wine, not one single article of commerce exported by the self-governing Colonies is subjected to taxation by the Mother Country. The whole burden of her indirect taxation falls upon the junior partners of the Empire: so far as tea, coffee, sugar, tobacco, and cacao come from within the Empire, they come entirely from India and the Crown Colonies, and yet the whole benefit of the Chamberlain scheme

would go to Canada, Australia, and to South Africa. Economists of the United Kingdom reply, "True but our taxes are revenue taxes, not protective. And our customers pay them, not you." Quite so: but nevertheless they limit the consumption of West Indian products, and prevent any nearer approach to Free Trade within the Empire.

Now, before considering how far Imperial Free Trade may be possible, let us consider whether it is desirable. Mr Chamberlain and his followers condemn what they call unilateral Free Trade, or the relations subsisting, say, between England and France. But I have never heard of a Protectionist so rabid as to condemn the bilateral Free Trade relations subsisting between England and Scotland. It is commonly considered that the first great Free Trade victory was won by Sir Robert Peel in 1846. That is not so. The first great victory accompanied the Anglo-Scottish Union in 1707, and the second followed tardily the Irish Union of 1801. The victory of 1846 was only the third in point of time, though the greatest in point of fact. If, then, the reciprocally free interchange of products between England and Scotland is good, why should it not be also good between other portions of the Empire? "Oh, but," it is replied, "the other portions of the Empire are widely scattered over the ocean, and so the conditions are quite different." Those who use this line of argument forget that, to the trade of an Empire controlling one half of the shipping of the world, the ocean is not an impediment but a highway. Look at the position in the West Indies; an archipelago of fertile islands, mostly belonging to the British Crown, and yet divided into a dozen

different Governments, and by a dozen different tariffs! Even Spain in the Philippines never descended to such a depth of fiscal absurdity. Even the Cannibal Islanders of the Pacific maintained insular Free Trade in their favourite food-stuff. "United we stand, and divided we fall." It is the divided condition of the British West Indies that prevents their voice from carrying that weight in the Councils of the Empire, to which, by their antiquity and intrinsic importance the West Indies are entitled. The first step then is to promote Free Trade among the various British West Indian Colonies, if possible, with the Federal system. We were recently informed that the incidence of taxation in Trinidad is about to come up for consideration, with a view to its re-distribution. I welcome that announcement and also the assurance given in the same speech of the maintenance of the Stamp Tax. It is only by the maintenance, and perhaps by the extension of the principle of direct taxation, that we, in Trinidad, can ever hope to remit something of that indirect taxation which seems now to press so hardly on the poorer classes, and which forms so insuperable a barrier to Imperial Free Trade. Trinidad owes a debt to the cause of Free Trade within the Empire, for she it was who destroyed the seed which might have grown into a mighty tree, interlacing the whole Empire with its branches. You remember the Canadian proposals of January 1900: how Canada made us an offer of absolute reciprocal Free Trade, excepting in alcohol and tobacco. You remember the arguments that went on for months in the local press and on the platform. In my opinion, the acceptance

of that offer would have enormously increased the trade between Canada and Trinidad, and done more to relieve the sugar industry than all the Conferences that ever sat at Brussels. Perhaps the greatest blunder Trinidad ever made was, when instead of taking Canada's proffered hand, she met her with a slap in the face. You know all the sophistical arguments against it. You remember the dangled bait of American reciprocity. You remember the bogey of American retaliation. As if the British Empire were to be run in deference to American sentiment! You recollect the argument of the insufficiency of the Canadian market. As if we should want ever to put all our eggs into one basket! You know also the argument that Trinidad would not be allowed to keep the Canadian market all to herself. Why, that was not an argument against, but the very strongest argument for, acceptance of the Canadian offer. For if Free Trade had been successful, and no one could doubt that it would be successful, in enormously increasing trade between Canada and Trinidad, Canada had intended to make similar arrangements with other West Indian Colonies. And then we should have seen two of the great sub-divisions of the Empire bound together in the permanent, unbargaining bonds that already united England, Scotland and Ireland—the bonds of Free Trade. I do not think it is too wild a dream to suggest that, if that had been successful, Canada in future might have extended her offer across the Pacific to Australia, and across the Atlantic to South Africa. Remember that the products of these groups of Colonies are not so much competitive as com-

plementary. Then years hence, when in the increase of their population, and in the development of their industries, those Colonies should approach more closely to the conditions of the Mother Country, their fear of the strong competition of her manufacturers might cease, and they might throw down their trade barriers before her also. It is only thus, by gradual, perhaps tedious, steps, by fostering Inter-Colonial Free Trade, that Imperial Free Trade can be approached. It is for the Colonies to learn to take forward steps, leaning on one another, in the direction of Free Trade, and not for them to ask the Mother Country to take a backward step into Protection, or to adopt any system of increased taxation which would make life harder for her toiling millions. Strong must flow the blood at the heart of the Empire, if strong shall be the limbs. The ideal of Free Trade within the Empire is not to be sought with Mr Chamberlain's aim of making ours a self-sustaining Empire. There is already one self-sustaining Empire in the world, and all the resources of our diplomacy are being brought to bear on opening its doors. Strange, indeed, would be the spectacle of Mr Chamberlain endeavouring to break down the tariff walls of China, while building a Chinese wall of tariffs around the British Empire.

Free Trade increases the total volume of commerce: preference, at best, but alters its direction. It is with the ultimate object of enlarging the volume and value of British Trade that Imperial Free Trade is to be sought. As the internal victory of Free Trade in 1707 preceded the external victory of 1846, so, by learning to trade freely among

themselves, the younger nations of the Empire may learn to dominate the wider fields that lie before them, when they shall be prepared to unite in trading freely with the outside world. In building up that future, it is my ardent wish that Trinidad, under wise and enlightened statesmanship, may rise to the full height of her opportunities in that new era of hope which is dawning before her.

## VII

### INTER-COLONIAL FREE TRADE

#### IS IT A POSSIBLE POLICY?

(Reprinted from the Dundee Advertiser of 12th April 1904)

I WONDER whether during all this fiscal controversy other Liberals have ever had searchings of heart as to the non-enlargement of the Free Trade area since the 'sixties? Why have Liberal Governments been content to pay lip-service to our existing system, and to stir no finger to extend it? Why have they neglected opportunities for action which would have, to a large degree, forestalled the present agitation for an unsound system of Imperial trade, by the gradual evolution of a sound one? Why have they, in fine, given tacit assent to the doctrine that Free Trade within the Empire is an impossibility, without ever considering whether means existed, slow, perhaps, but sure, by which such a splendid consummation might be attained?

Mr Chamberlain throws down the gauntlet, and challenges us to "produce an alternative policy." Our somewhat quavering and evasive reply is, "Temperance and Education." Are we so certain that these constitute a programme so alluring to the electors that they will continue to return a Free Trade majority, not only at the General Election

now imminent, but also at the next? Remember that a cycle of bad trade, intensified by the wastage of the South African war, is upon us, and that it is certain to produce, first, distress; second, dissatisfaction; third, desire for change at any price. Indeed Mr Chamberlain openly reckons this as one of his trump cards.

Now, why should the Free Trade hand be played entirely on the defensive? Is Free Trade so poor a policy that it is incapable of expansion beyond the boundaries of the United Kingdom? If the possibility of its gradual extension to the Empire is suggested, zealots hold up hands in holy horror, exclaiming, "You mean a Zollverein"! Surely this is rather loose thinking. Let us clear the ground by a definition.

A Zollverein is a union of states with absolute internal Free Trade among themselves, and a uniform, generally a high, protective tariff against the rest of the world.

Free Trade within the Empire connotes absolutely unfettered internal Free Trade; but also, while its ultimate aim would be the abolition of all external duties, except for revenue, it would sanction the imposition, by each component state, of such taxation on foreign imports as its temporary necessities might dictate. Such a concession may cause a pang to the purist, but without it no forward movement can ever be made.

No Liberal would deny the advantages which have accrued from internal Free Trade in the United Kingdom. If, then, internal Free Trade is good for the United Kingdom, why should it not be equally good for the rest of the Empire? Provided

always that the Mother Country is asked to take no backward step, and to impose no protective duties.

The stock objection (and it is a very grave one) to any advance in this direction of Imperial Free Trade is that the self-governing Colonies would decline to remove tariffs intended to exclude manufactured goods competing with their own infant industries. And as the United Kingdom is the principal exporter of manufactures, it is perhaps not surprising that these tariffs are directed even more against her than against foreign countries.

A second obstacle, not perhaps so generally recognised, is that the Mother Country persists in raising a considerable proportion of her revenue by indirect taxation upon Colonial produce. Mr Chamberlain in all his speeches takes into account only the great self-governing Colonies. We search in vain for any allusion to the existence of India or the Crown Colonies. Yet the fact is that we tax not one single article imported from Canada and Australia. It is upon the shoulders of the weaker brethren of the Empire that the whole burden of their Mother's indirect taxation is laid. It is somewhat difficult to persuade a West Indian or a planter from Ceylon of the advantage of the United Kingdom's Free Trade, when his tea, his sugar, his cacao, his coffee, his tobacco, his molasses, and his rum are all laid under the ban. And the draught is none the more palatable to him when you explain that these are "revenue," not "protective" taxes. He is apt to reply that the United Kingdom consumption is diminished all the same, and his production correspondingly prevented from its natural expansion.

To deal with the second objection first, there are two alternative means for its removal. One, highly questionable, is to exempt the Colonial imports named above from taxation, while continuing it on those from foreign countries. This would be quite in the spirit of Mr Chamberlain's propaganda, and, while relieving the Colonial producer of his grievance, would do little to reduce the cost of these commodities to the British consumer—nay, he would have to make up in fresh taxation for the consequent loss to the revenue.

The other alternative is to advocate boldly the abolition of all import duties except upon alcohol and tobacco, and to put the taxation of land values to the forefront of our programme. This great policy has remained in the stage of a pious opinion long enough. Its yield would easily pay for the freeing of the breakfast table, and confer a double benefit on the working man by freeing the land as well.

Now, with regard to the first objection to Imperial Free Trade, it is transparently clear that the great self-governing colonies have no intention of proclaiming themselves self-denying colonies by adopting the principle of the "schedule of forbidden industries." They intend to build up certain trades, and, to do this, they will prevent our competition, be the cost what it may to their consumers. They will, therefore, not yet grant Free Trade to the Mother Country. May they not grant it to one another? I believe they may. They do not, to any great extent, compete with each other's industries. Their productions are indeed rather complementary than competitive.

Yet Liberal Governments have come and gone without an effort to arrange Inter-Colonial Free Trade even among those Colonies more directly under the control of Downing Street. In our West Indian Archipelago there are almost as many tariffs as there are islands. Even Spain achieved a greater measure of Free Trade in her government of the Philippine group. The same deplorable lack of system prevails throughout our Oriental and other dependencies.

The Anglo-Saxon Republic has shown paradoxically a truer Imperial instinct than the Anglo-Saxon Empire, in making mutual Free Trade the basis of union with its new colonies of Puerto Rico and Hawaii. The ocean is no barrier there. Can we learn nothing from this example?

One British statesman, at least, is awake to the signs of the times and to the advantage of closer Inter-Colonial commercial relations. In January 1900, Mr Fielding, Finance Minister of Canada, made an offer of mutual Free Trade (excluding alcohol and tobacco) to the West Indian Colony of Trinidad. Each Colony affords much that the other requires. Canada exports timber, salt fish, dairy produce, flour, and oats. Trinidad supplies sugar, molasses, cacao, fruit, and asphalt. A large trade surmounts even the existing tariff walls. Mr Fielding saw that, if free, it would become magnificent. Downing Street evinced no special interest in the proposal, and referred it to the Trinidad Government. Crown Colony Government possesses no appliances for the education of public opinion, even when the Government is better educated than the public. The Trinidad Government was just then

engaged in a futile endeavour to negotiate a preferential tariff with the United States. So Mr Fielding's little barque went to pieces on the rocks of folly, lured on by the sweet singers of American reciprocity. Downing Street never realised that it had been freighted with the seed of Free Trade within the Empire.

If these arrangements with Trinidad had been successful—and no Free Trader can doubt of their success—Canada contemplated embarking on a further Free Trade voyage. She intended to extend her offer to the other West Indian Colonies as well. Thus we would have seen entire Free Trade between two great groups of our Colonies. And who knows but that Canada might have extended her offer across the Pacific to Australia, or over the Atlantic to South Africa?

Even now it is not too late. A Liberal Colonial Secretary might do much for Inter-Colonial Free Trade. Canada could not, it is true, repeat without loss of dignity her offer to Trinidad, after receiving a slap in the face as signal as it was foolish. But, were Downing Street to show sympathy instead of apathy, Trinidad might be induced to reconsider her decision, and herself renew the proposal. Or maybe some other West Indian Colony, such as British Guiana, might be found to take a truer measure of its interests and its destiny.

Again, a Liberal Colonial Secretary might do something towards arranging Free Trade among our various Crown Colonies, and much more towards promoting Free Trade between these Colonies and the Mother Country. Or he might, at the next meeting of the Premiers of our self-

governing Colonies, bring before them the advantages of arranging Free Trade with one another.

Ten years hence—and but short in the life-time of a nation are the years which seem so long to the heated brain of a statesman in a hurry—years hence, when these great Colonies of ours, as regards their population and their industrial development, approximate more closely to the condition at which the United Kingdom had arrived in 1846, possibly they will be more disposed to view the competition of the Mother Country in another light, and meet her upon a Free Trade and not a preferential basis.

Free Trade within the Empire is a great and noble ideal if not accompanied by protection without. A self-sustaining Empire—that is, one “protected” from trade intercourse with the rest of the world—is an ideal worthy only of such minds as planned the Great Wall of China.

## VIII

### THE PROMOTION OF CANE FARMING

(*A Speech delivered to the Agricultural Society at Port-of-Spain, 31st January 1905*)

MR WYATT said that, as his letter had embodied all he intended to say on the motion, he would then formally move :—"That this Society, recognising that cane farmers have contributed to an appreciable extent in maintaining the sugar industry of the Colony during the past years of extreme depression, is of opinion that every effort within the power of the Society should be made to place cane farming on a firm, satisfactory, and permanent footing."

Mr Norman Lamont said: As President of the Cane Farmers' Association, I rise with pleasure to second the resolution proposed by Mr Wyatt. I regret that I was unable, through absence from the Colony, to attend the recent Agricultural Conference, as there were several things I should have liked to say in my presidential capacity. I trust, therefore, that this meeting will bear with me a few minutes, while I say a few words in support of the motion.

The motion falls into two parts: the first, "recognising that cane farmers have contributed to an appreciable extent in maintaining the sugar industry during the past years of extreme depression,"

I think, is an almost self-evident proposition. After remaining for several years at about 105,000 tons, the farmers' production jumped in 1901 to 170,000 tons, an increase which has since been maintained. Now this has been concurrent with a decrease of estate production in an almost exactly corresponding ratio, since the total output remains the same.

Now you may argue that this coincidence is purely accidental, and you may also argue that if, in the four worst years the sugar industry has ever known, the farmers' output has made and maintained an increase of 70,000 tons, what would it have done in four prosperous years?

The immediate future may provide the answer, especially if steps be taken in words of the motion, "to place cane farming on a firm, satisfactory, and permanent footing." To this end action should be taken along three distinct lines. First, I advocate the adoption, generally, of a sliding scale, because, until the farmer has some definite assurance that he will receive a fair remuneration for his cane, it is idle to talk of a "permanent footing." I myself have done what, as an individual, I have been able to do, during the last few years, in the matter of a sliding scale; and in spite of many obstacles, that sliding scale, though working unevenly sometimes, has, on the whole, been a success. I do not say that it is an ideal scale, but I put it forward as a basis for discussion between members of the planting fraternity and cane farmers who are members of the Society. One important point it has elicited, viz., the necessity of a minimum price. After several years' experience we found last year

that it was perfectly useless to let the price go below 9s. per ton, because, in years when we paid 8s. 6d. or 8s., the result had been that the farmer neglected his cultivation, which diminished the succeeding crops of cane; and therefore the new agreement which we made last year fixed the minimum price at 9s. The question of a maximum price also deserves consideration.

My second point is in connection with railway extension. I suppose that in any other country in the world where the railway is not a Government monopoly, there would already have been an extension of the railway system to almost every important cane-farming centre, because the private companies would have been eager to follow up the farmers as they extended their plantations, in order to earn the large profits to be made by the lucrative traffic of hauling cane. The estates have done what lay in their power to provide a network of lines to bring in what cane those farmers around them had, but so far as any system of true connection between the different estates and centres by means of the Trinidad Government Railway is concerned, the matter has scarcely ever been discussed or even thought of. Now Naparima and Savana Grande have long been two very important and most anciently settled districts in the Colony; and yet we push our railway to Tabaquite! Until every factory is served by the Trinidad Government Railway, there can be no real Free Trade for the farmer in cane, since his market is limited to donkey-distance of the nearest factory or tramway siding. It is not that the railway rates are prohibitive, for they do not compare unfavour-

ably with those of Louisiana, where I have seen a train of farmers' canes come in from 150 miles. The charge there is 50c. per ton up to 25 miles, then 75c. up to 75 miles, the railway providing the cars. Thus, up to a distance of 15 miles, our Trinidad rates are actually more favourable.

One difference of importance must be noted, viz., that the Louisiana farmer is generally a planter minus a factory, and he can quickly load a whole train with his own canes. Here it might take one of our small farmers several days to load a 6-ton truck; but I do not believe that this difficulty would be allowed by a sympathetic Government to stand in the way of an extension of the industry, when it could so easily be remedied by the provision of a scale at its loading stations; while a charge of 1d. per load for weighing would cover interest and upkeep.

Members of this Society must remember what happened in 1901. When the wet season set in, very many of the farmers in the Princetown district had large quantities of canes still standing. Local factories were unable to take them, being compelled to concentrate all their efforts on working up their own cane. At Palmiste we had finished our crop. In order to get the farmers out of their difficulty I agreed to buy their cane, and to take delivery of it *ex* truck at San Fernando Railway Station. But the arrangement fell through, because at Princetown Railway Station there was no weigh-bridge, and there was therefore no means by which each farmer could ascertain the tonnage of his own canes.

Thirdly, there is the important question of

Agricultural Banks which was somewhat superficially discussed at the Conference. Mr L. de Verteuil and the present Colonial Secretary of Jamaica (Mr Bourne) when here took a keen interest in the problem, and collected data with a view to the possible introduction of a bank on the Raiffeisen system. If attempted, it must be begun on quite a small scale, under careful supervision, and with a very careful selection of men, in order to avoid the catastrophes which have befallen previous efforts in similar directions. But it must be remembered that in dealing with cane there is practically no risk, as compared with fruit or vegetables, because loans could always be recovered by sending a note of the amount to the factory where the canes are ground to be gradually deducted at each pay.

Such a banking system might also be the means of effecting a very material improvement in the cultivation methods pursued by the farmers. If banks were started, it would be not only advisable but necessary that there should be some system of periodical inspection of the crops on which advances were made. If that were so, and a farmer knew that advances were dependent upon the condition of his cultivation, he would have the strongest possible incentive to keep his cultivation in a proper state. If, instead of paying 60 per cent. per month, he could borrow for 6 or 8 per cent. per annum, it would be a strong inducement to him to improve his cultivation.

I do not wish to seem to offer a panacea in what I recommend to the Society. Far from it, I am only making these suggestions as a basis for

future discussion. Objections are, as I well know, raised to *any* extension of the farming system, and therefore anything that may establish it more firmly is condemned as bad.

It is argued that the cane farmer will exhaust the land; that he will suck it, as he would an orange, and then throw the peel in the landlord's face. This is held by some self-styled friends of the farmer. My own experience is that the best of the cane farmers get quite as large a return as the best of the estates; and while, no doubt, a large number of them fall grievously below this standard, yet I do not believe that they seriously exhaust the land, because no manure at all is certainly better than the wrong manure. If any of them really get, as is alleged by a gentleman whose word I should not like to controvert, so low an average return as  $5\frac{3}{4}$  tons per acre of cane over a period of twenty years, I regard that not as exhausting the soil but as a sort of perpetual fallow! In order to produce a crop like that, the tillage of the land could only be carried on at the rarest intervals of time and space. A few inches of the surface soil would be occasionally tickled, while the sub-soil would be continually increasing its richness beneath. But this is very much what the estates are doing. It is conceivable that cane farming may succeed because it is cheap. It is probable that the methods of the Trinidad Estates Company may succeed, because they are efficient. It is impossible that the average estates' cultivation should succeed, for it is neither cheap nor efficient.

Then it is argued that cane farming is harmful because it competes with the estates for labour.

Well, it would be very strange if farmers could grow canes without labour. But I believe that those labourers whom the farmers employ bring quite as much cane to the mill as indentured labourers working only a little over 100 days a year. And I believe that cane farming has helped us in that it has undoubtedly succeeded in keeping employed, in the production of cane, men who would have still left the estates on their time being up, but would have taken up the cultivation of vegetables, rice, or fruit, or become small shopkeepers, or returned to India.

If cane farmers compete with the estates for labour, the remedy is to be sought not in the disparagement of their efforts, or the disarrangement of the industry, but by following the excellent example of the Trinidad Estates Company in endeavouring to economise our wasted labour in field work, and endeavouring to fix our working population on the soil. Most of us have succeeded in saving labour in the factory, but what we have saved in the factory is infinitesimal in comparison with what might be saved in the field. Some of our planting friends seem to regard the Government of the Colony much as they regard the moon—an appliance to regulate the tides. They seem to think that it exists simply to raise successive tides—spring tides, if possible—of indentured labour, and then to prevent the ebb; while they themselves do nothing to retain on their estates those fertilising waters, and so to economise their use.

Gentlemen, I commend this resolution to you. This great cane-farming industry has grown up of itself, unaided from without. If the Government

had accorded to it one tithe of the care and attention and encouragement which they have rightly given to the fruit industry, most of the difficulties to which I have referred would never have existed ; others would have been overcome ere this. Even now it is not too late. The farmers have given us a notable example of what is not too frequent here—of self-help. It is on their behalf that I have ventured to detain you so long, and that I now implore you to accord to the resolution, not your grudging acquiescence, but your whole-hearted support.

After further discussion, the debate was adjourned to February 7th.

## IX

### THE INCIDENCE OF TAXATION LEVIED TO PROVIDE INDENTURED LABOUR

(*A Speech delivered to the Agricultural Society at  
Port-of-Spain, 7th February 1905*)

AT a meeting of the Agricultural Society of Trinidad, at Port-of-Spain, on 7th February 1905, the debate on Mr Wyatt's motion was resumed. After speeches by Mr George White, the Hon. G. Townsend Fenwick, C.M.G., Messrs A. W. Rolleston, R. Rust, the Rev. Dr Morton, and others.

Mr Norman Lamont replied as follows : I hope I may be pardoned if I speak a second time in this debate in reply to a few of the criticisms upon my speech last week.

It has, in the first place, been argued that our farmers could not understand the principle of the sliding scale, though canes are purchased thus in Demerara, Puerto Rico, and at the new Gunthorpe's factory at Antigua, where I notice that a minimum price of 7s. 6d. has been fixed. It is, I am sure, quite wrong to assume that the farmers of Trinidad are any less intelligent than those of other West Indian Islands. I assert absolutely that our farmers understand perfectly the principle of the sliding scale, and would accept it to-morrow.

Then with regard to the labour supply. The anti-cane-farming party seem to consider that there is something reprehensible in the fact of cane farmers growing canes by paid labour, and they hold up their hands in holy horror at that dreadful spectacle; cane farmers, they think, should work with their own strength alone. A second charge is, that I, who employ no indentured labour, am drawing free labourers from other estates, and thus employing time-expired immigrants without contributing in any adequate degree to the cost of the importation of fresh ones. It is suggested that I purposely—"perhaps wisely"—avoided the labour question. Perhaps, when I have finished, my opponents will consider that they would have done wisely to follow my example. If I did neglect that subject, it was from a delicate consideration of their feelings. But where they have not hesitated to rush in, I certainly do not fear to tread.

Immigration, as an abstract proposition, may be defended in two ways; the urgent need of estates for more labour, which they cannot obtain from natural sources; and the urgent need of a Colony for more population. Now, I admit from the first that this Colony could probably support a population of 1,000,000; and that, if immigration be desirable, it would be impossible to find a more industrious, thrifty, and useful class of immigrants than the East Indian. But two questions arise. Is it expedient, and if so, for how long will it be so, to hasten by these artificial means, these forcing-house methods, an unnaturally rapid increase in the population of the Colony, and at what point will it be better to let nature take her course? Hitherto,

successive Governments of the Colony have considered that rapid methods were expedient, and have therefore assisted immigration to the amount of £25,000 a year out of general revenue.

Next, certain firms and individuals conducting a particular industry maintain that their business cannot be carried on without an annual influx of some thousands of persons, working under compulsory terms and at a fixed wage: that though this system has been in vogue for fifty years their need for labour is as great as ever; and that every inhabitant of the Colony must forever contribute indirectly to the cost of immigration; while everyone else engaged in the industry, great or small, must contribute directly, whether they want more labour or not.

That is the case, and merely to state it is to admit the total and hopeless failure of the present system of sugar estate management. That, after fifty years of continued immigration the sugar estates should be no better provided with labour than they were fifty years ago, though their output has not increased, and in spite of all that science has done in invention of labour-saving devices, is a condemnation of the system too complete to need further amplification from me. And why has it failed? Because no serious attempt has been made to settle time-expired immigrants on or around the estates, or to encourage them to continue in the production of cane.

It is here, at this point, that the true interests of the Colony and the supposed interests of the sugar planters diverge. The true interests of the Colony lie, not in the least in the mere increase of a roving

population of time-expired immigrants cast annually adrift to make way for fresh hordes of new comers. An increase of population is only desirable when that population is gradually settled in useful and permanent occupation of the land. And it is because the cane farmers are succeeding, and because I am succeeding, in so fixing the people, in creating a real peasantry, that this outcry is raised, and endeavours are to be made to crush us by an acreage tax.

My critics allege that I endeavour to entice immigrants from estates which pay for importation. As a matter of fact, there are on my estate 147 Indian immigrants originally indentured to other estates, out of a total resident working population of 991, or slightly over 14 per cent. I am informed, on what I believe to be good authority, that this is the usual percentage elsewhere. I have made no special efforts to induce these people to come, I have paid no higher wages, nor given smaller tasks. As to the charge that I have not contributed to the cost of immigration, I have paid in immigration taxes, since 1896, when I gave up indentured labour, £8,059, 12s., or about £1,000 a year for labour *for other planters*. If there were really a lack of labour, one would expect to find that the labourers worked on an average from 280 to 300 days per year; but the fact is that the average immigrant only works for about 100 days. The reasons alleged for that lack of employment are idleness and imprisonment, and that among a class of people the most industrious and law-abiding in the West Indies! Let the Society enquire into these excuses, and they will find that they apply

for the most part to the wet season. During the harvesting of the crop, employment is steady, but, during the wet season, so far from there being a shortage of labour, in many districts there is a superfluity. But what is to be the limit of the period of Government assistance in the matter? If 50 years is insufficient for this great importation of labour, will 100 years be enough, or 150 years, or are we to be saddled with this Old Man of the Sea for ever and ever? What is needed is a time-limit. We should say, "If, by a certain date, you cannot show that you have made a serious effort to provide really steady employment for your indentured immigrants, the Government contribution will cease for ever; you may import all you like after that, but you will pay the whole cost yourselves." By that means there would be substituted for a public duty, which planters resolutely ignore, a financial inducement, which they would thoroughly understand, and we should find support and encouragement for the cane-farming industry among the men who now desire to destroy it though posing as its friends.

Once more I commend Mr Wyatt's resolution to the Society. Not a single argument in this debate has been adduced which has in the least upset or even shaken his fundamental proposition that cane farming is a necessity to the stability of our industry and should be accorded every encouragement.

Instead of vainly attempting to increase your population to the extent of your cultivation, reduce your cultivation to the extent which can be worked by the population which you are able to fix on the

soil ; introduce every possible labour-saving contrivance ; give the rest of your land out to cane farmers. So may this great industry succeed ; so may the Colony prosper ; and what is even more important, so will you promote not only the material but the moral improvement of the people.

At the meeting of the Society held on Tuesday, 14th March, the discussion was brought to a close, and Mr Wyatt's resolution being put to the vote, was agreed to.

## X

### INDENTURED LABOUR, AND THE BRUSSELS CONVENTION

(*A Speech delivered to the Out-Voters of Buteshire, at Glasgow, on Friday, 24th February 1905*)

GENTLEMEN, my election address has been in your hands for some time, and from it you will have seen that my opinions have not altered since I last sought your suffrages in 1900. Then the great questions before the electors were the conclusion of the war and the settlement of South Africa. One of the things constantly dinned into our ears was that the Transvaal is a glorious country for white men, but that the Boer population led a mere pastoral life, and neglected agriculture, whereas, by the expenditure of a few millions upon irrigation, their land could be brought under the plough and turned into a great wheat-producing area. We don't hear much of the Transvaal becoming a wheat-producing area now! All we hear of is the necessity for giving greater prosperity to the mines, which has been the excuse for the introduction of large numbers of indentured Chinese labourers under degrading conditions. Now, I hold that this experiment is quite unjustified. If, as they told us five years ago, the Transvaal is a white man's

country, white labour could have been obtained, as Mr Cresswell has proved at the Village Main Reef, provided that an adequate wage was offered. If, in the next place, white labour was unsuitable or unobtainable, then free black native labour should have been employed. There was plenty of it available before the war, but the mine owners then cut down the rate of wages below what the natives could live at, under the extortionate tariff which prevails in that country ; and so the natives refused to work. Failing native labour, the Government ought to have endeavoured to seek the necessary supply within the British Empire. Why was not recourse had to the teeming millions of British India who constantly suffer from famine through over-population, and drought and other causes? Because, gentlemen, the Government of India refused to look at the conditions which were to be imposed upon the labourers recruited for indentured employment in the mines.

Now, the importation of indentured labourers can be justified in two ways—the need of a country for additional population, or the need of an industry for additional labour : neither of which can be obtained from natural sources. Well, in the Transvaal, I submit, neither need was present. Plenty of labour was available—white, black, or brown, at fair wages and under fair conditions. What the Transvaal wants is not yellow labour, but more white men. But the mine owners do not desire a “white proletariat,” for a white proletariat would soon want *votes*.

In the next place, there is no imperative urgency for the development of the gold mines. The gold

won't run away. The development of the mines is not aiding the permanent settlement of the country, for the gold is merely exported to pay dividends upon their inflated capital to shareholders in Europe, and only an infinitesimal proportion returns in the form of imports. The mines are not inexhaustible, and when they have been exhausted, how much of their wealth will have remained in the Transvaal to benefit the Transvaal?

If the importation of indentured Chinese labour is justifiable for gold mining, it is tenfold more justifiable for agriculture; for a more rapid agricultural development would really tend to the permanent advantage of the country and its settlers. But what can we expect with China at the prow and Judæa at the helm?

I am afraid that even a Liberal Government might not now be able to abrogate the Chinese labour ordinance, but at least it could give to South Africa a form of self-government. Not merely a tinkering with self-government, but a full and free federal constitution for the whole country, with subordinate Parliaments for the five different Colonies. That granted, I would reserve for the consideration of such a Federal Parliament this question of indentured labour, for it is a question not for the Transvaal alone, but for the whole country; and I would leave it to South Africa as a whole to say whether this blot upon their reputation should be continued.

Now, gentlemen, I have done with South Africa, but before I leave the question, let me repeat that I entirely condemn the introduction of indentured Chinese labour as not only bad in itself, but as doing

nothing for the permanent advantage of the country, but calculated rather to make the Transvaal, at no distant date, into a pale imitation of a burnt-out American mining-camp.

Since my arrival yesterday I have been bombarded with letters concerning my attitude towards indentured labour. Some of these letters are couched in terms which it is not too strong to describe as distinctly inelegant. I do not complain, for it is certainly important for the electors to know whether I speak with two voices upon this subject. But it is unfortunate that the authors of these epistles, before they rushed into print, did not make themselves acquainted with the facts. They point to my evidence before the West Indian Royal Commission of 1897, and say that I told the Commission that I could not run my West Indian estate without "coolies." Quite true; but I determined to see whether it was not possible to run it without *indentured* "coolies." Accordingly I ceased to indenture any fresh "coolies," and those already upon the estate gradually became free, as their time expired; and since 1901 no indentured people have been employed by me. Now, I ceased to indenture coolies in 1897, and in 1897 I had no Parliamentary ambitions. My decision was not reached because of political exigencies. In 1897, when *The Scotsman* was still ingeminating the war which has led up to the demand for indentured labour in Africa, I had no idea—no one had any idea—that the question of indentured labour would ever become politically acute.

Well, in ceasing to employ indentured labour, I have been subjected to a considerable amount of

odium and abuse from my brother-planters. And indeed the odium and abuse have not been confined to the other side of the Atlantic. I have been, and I remain, completely indifferent to both, whichever side of the Atlantic they come from, for I am convinced that my action was right in the interests of my estate as well as of the colony of Trinidad. Let me repeat that the importation of indentured labour can, in my belief, be justified by an imperative demand for additional population, or for additional labour, not otherwise obtainable. I am not opposed to indentured labour, under the mild and just ordinance sanctioned by the last Liberal Government, so long as it can be *proved to be necessary*, and in the *interests of the Colony*. But I dislike it myself, and I dispensed with it at the earliest possible moment.

The weak point of the West Indian system lies, not in the condition of the labourers under the ordinance, but in the fact that no provision exists for settling—or for compelling planters to settle—their time-expired immigrants in permanent and useful occupation of the land. Thus time-expired coolies drift away from the estates, and planters continue to declare that indentured immigration is still “necessary,” because of a shortage of labour, which they themselves do nothing to prevent. But in spite of this blot the Indian coolie comes to Trinidad with his wife, as an apprenticed colonist, as a permanent settler; the Chinese coolie goes to South Africa as a money-making machine, under a three years’ time-limit, to be discharged as soon as his time is up. When the Chinese immigrant can settle in the Transvaal after his time is up, with his

wife and family, when he can take up a farm, when he can become a landowner, a small shopkeeper, or a large merchant; when you find a Chinaman occupying the position of schoolmaster, of mayor of an important town, or a minister of religion, then, gentlemen, it will be time enough to start a comparison between the conditions of indentured labour as they exist in the West Indies and as they exist in the Transvaal. But has it really come to this, that I am arraigned in the public press, and that I have to justify myself before this great meeting because I have dared to employ free labour? If that is so, gentlemen, then God help the British Empire!

But my adversaries have a second line of attack. They say that if I employ indentured labour, I am a hypocrite; if I do not employ it, I am a thief. That I filch other people's time-expired labourers away from them without contributing in any adequate degree to the cost of fresh importations. What are the facts? Under the Trinidad system the Government of the Colony contributes one-third of the cost of the annual importation of indentured immigrants, and the balance, save for a small sum raised by indenture fees, is levied by means of an export tax upon the produce of all planters, whether that produce is grown by means of indentured labour or not. Well, I employ 991 persons, and of these only 147 or 14·3 per cent. were originally indentured to other estates. That is quite a usual proportion, and I have done nothing whatever to entice other people's labourers to come to me. Since I discontinued indenturing fresh coolies, I have contributed in export tax no less a sum than £8,059, 12s. to provide other planters with indentured labour,

which I do not myself require. I pay that tax because I must. But if for the mild conditions of the Trinidad ordinance it were proposed to substitute those valid in the Transvaal, I should be inclined to meet the demands of the tax-collector with passive resistance, like Dr Clifford and his heroic followers.

The gravest of the new problems which have arisen since the General Election is undoubtedly the Fiscal Question. It is a question so large, so far-reaching, and so intricate that it would be hopeless for me to attempt to deal with it thoroughly in the time that remains to us to-night. But there is one aspect of it which figures largely in this Election, and upon it I should like to state my opinion. I mean the Brussels Sugar Convention. My opponents believe that here they have me in a tight place. I am not at all afraid to tackle them. They say that I have gained by the Convention. Of course I have. But if they think that I must, therefore, regarding it, put my principles in my pocket, they make a great mistake. If you do me the honour of electing me to the House of Commons, I should certainly regard it as my duty to abstain from voting upon a matter where my financial interests are so largely and so intimately concerned. Now, the position is this. The West Indian depression was undoubtedly caused very largely by the bounties. The machinery of sugar factories, at any rate in Demerara and in Trinidad, is up-to-date; and where it is not up-to-date, it is because of the lack of confidence created by the bounties. Yet, for twenty years past, enormous losses have been incurred on most plantations, especially in the three years 1901,

1902, and 1903. Let me point out the position in concrete form by quoting figures relating to my own estate. In 1900 the nett loss was £1,000, in 1901 it was £8,000, in 1902 it was £11,000, and in 1903 it was £3,000. These are actual facts. No business can be conducted on such a basis. Obviously that could not continue. I decided to abandon sugar altogether. I planted no cane for the succeeding crop. Many other great estates did likewise. But as soon as the Convention came into force, a great wave of confidence passed over the West Indies, capital began to flow in, planting was recommenced. There have been booms in sugar before, prices have been even higher than they are now, but those booms never gave real confidence to the sugar industry. And if confidence is established now, it is because planters know that, under the Convention, they cannot be undersold by competitors aided by their Governments with bounties large or small, as the case may be, but that all sugar-growers henceforth compete in our home market on equal terms. That is the position from the West Indian point of view; and what I state is not a matter of opinion, but of *fact*. I make a free gift to my opponents of the admission that to the West Indies the Brussels Convention has been the greatest boon for a generation. Three hundred thousand people who are employed directly in the West Indian sugar industry have been saved from being thrown out of employment. Hundreds of thousands of pounds of capital invested in the factories have been saved from total loss.

So much for the West Indian point of view. Now for the Mother Country's point of view. No doubt the sugar-refining industry has been placed

on a surer footing. But if all this is due to the rise in the price of sugar, it is evident that the money must have come out of somebody's pocket. It has come, of course, out of the consumer's pocket; and, since sugar is not only a food stuff but a raw material, those industries which depend upon it, like the jam and confectionery trades, and the trade in aerated waters, have doubtless been compelled to raise their price to the consumer. But how far has this great rise in the price of sugar been due to the Convention? We Free Traders rightly deride Mr Chamberlain because he makes all his comparisons of what he calls our declining trade with the boom year, 1872. But the Cobden Club have quite eclipsed this feat. They take one particular week of the year 1902, during which week the price of sugar fell lower than it has ever done before or since; they take the present high price as permanent, and they take the difference as the loss that has accrued to the nation through the Brussels Convention!

But I put it to you that the price of sugar could not have permanently remained at £3 below the cost of production, as it was during the favourite week of the Cobden Club. And while the Convention is partly responsible for the rise, that rise has been principally caused by the phenomenally short crop of beet sugar, due to the prolonged drought on the Continent. That great rise in price is very much regretted by the sugar trade. We should all much rather see prices lower, for a continuance of the present boom-prices could only lead to over-production, and to further violent fluctuation in the market.

Then you must remember that £4 per ton of the present price of sugar is due to the sugar tax put on to help to pay for the South African war. That addition to the price was not so much felt when the price was low, but it does create a real grievance when the price of sugar is high. In my opinion that tax ought now to be repealed, or transferred from an article which is a prime necessity of the poor to luxuries of the rich, or to liquor, or the land.

Now, as to the future. The Brussels Convention has been concluded for a term of five years; and I do not suppose that if, at the end of that time, we were to denounce it, foreign powers would be likely to incur the enormous cost of re-imposing their bounties, in order to give us the benefit of sugar below cost price. And we cannot abrogate it before the five years' term, because we have entered into a hard and fast agreement with the other signatory Powers.

Now, I am being taken constantly to task, and accused of inconsistency as a Free Trader, because, in my evidence before the West Indian Royal Commission of 1897, I advocated the neutralisation of foreign bounties by means of countervailing duties. By a countervailing duty is meant a duty imposed at the port of entry exactly equivalent, in each case, to the bounty given by the country from which a consignment of sugar comes. I still believe that that course is quite consistent with Free Trade; and that it would have been preferable to the method adopted under the Convention. If the countervailing duties had been found to be injurious to us we could have removed them at any moment

without asking the consent of other Powers. And no sugar would have been excluded from our ports, as is the case with Russian and other sugars under the Brussels Convention.

However, the Royal Commission reported *against* countervailing duties; and, looking at the question only from the Mother Country's point of view, I daresay that they were right, and that I was wrong. But their remedies failed to restore prosperity to the West Indian sugar Colonies, and therefore the Government concluded this Convention.

But it concluded this Convention without any enquiry whatever as to its effect on *this* country. The Government knew from the report of the Royal Commission what the effect of the abolition of the bounties would be on the West Indies, but they had no Royal Commission to enquire into its possible effects here. They acted in the dark, and that is the reason of all this outcry.

Now, Tariff Reformers will reply to me that if I am in favour of countervailing duties to neutralise bounties, I agree with them as to the evils of "dumping." Well, "dumping" is of two kinds: articles can be "dumped" here below the price at which we can produce them, either, on the one hand, because our foreign competitors are directly subsidised by these great doles, grants, subventions, or bounties given to them out of the National Exchequer by their respective Governments; or, on the other hand, it may be because those competitors are more industrious, better educated, more scientific, more highly skilled in the cultivation or in the manufacture of a particular commodity. Obviously,

there is a great distinction between these two things. And doubtless "dumping," of whichever kind, has to us both its advantages and its disadvantages: advantages to the consumer in enabling him to obtain an article at a price below which it can be produced in this country: disadvantages to the producer, in that his industry may be rendered less profitable, or wholly unprofitable, in which case it must, of course, cease to exist.

I myself happen to think that the first sort of "dumping," *i.e.*, bounties by foreign states, may fairly be met by countervailing duties. But, whether or not, the whole matter is one of very great importance, and might well be thoroughly examined by a Departmental Committee of Board of Trade experts, who would be able to calculate the relative loss and gain to this country of particular cases of "dumping," either real or supposed.

Let me say one word with regard to the injury alleged to have been done by the Convention to the jam and confectionery trades. I confess I have not much sympathy for the jam people. During the West Indian depression they have constantly said to us, "If sugar doesn't pay, why don't you grow something else?" Or, "You sugar-planters ought to modernise your methods!" Well, I am not going to advise the jam-makers to "make something else," or even "to modernise their methods"; but I will say to them that if they really believe that the present enormous price of sugar has come to stay, then I recommend them to do what Sir Thomas Lipton and Mr Cadbury have done in the case of tea and cacao, namely, to acquire sugar estates for themselves. Then they can be sure

of a sufficient supply<sup>7</sup> of sugar at cost price ; and at the same time they will make a double profit.

In conclusion, let me say that the benefit to myself of this Convention in no degree blinds me to the injury which the present high price of sugar is doing to the consumer, even though I hold that there is a tendency to attribute to the Convention a far greater proportion of that injury than is its due. If the Liberal Party were returned to power, and could devise any form of relief to the consumer and to the injured home industries, I should not dream for a moment of allowing my private interests to come before my allegiance to that Party, or before my duty to those who, I hope, will be my constituents.

## XI

### WEST INDIAN FEDERATION

*(A Speech delivered in the House of Commons, 17th May 1905)*

I RISE, Mr Speaker, to call the attention of the House to the affairs of a group of Colonies to which that attention is but seldom directed. The West Indies indeed were incidentally mentioned in Thursday's debate, in connection with the abandonment of the naval base at St Lucia—as having been the scene of some of the greatest naval battles in our history. They are, by reason of their ancient sorrows, also the field on which have been fought out repeated contests between the rival forces—in this House—of two opposing schools of political economy.

I want the House to consider to-night whether the causes of West Indian calamities may not be more deeply seated than has been suggested by discussions upon the Sugar Convention or upon the Bounty Question : whether there may not be great underlying defects, administrative and economic, which have largely contributed to the results which we all deplore. For we have seen depression after depression sweep over the West Indies—depressions so prolonged in duration, so acute in their character,

and so rapid in their repetition, as almost to reveal the paradox of a chronic crisis.

Commission after Commission has been sent out to enquire into these calamities : with very varying terms of reference, very varying recommendations, and very varying results. The most recent Commission was that of 1897, on which the Right Hon. Member for Berwick (Sir E. Grey) was prominent : it made certain rather unimportant recommendations, which have, with one marked exception, been carried into effect. An earlier Commission, consisting of Sir Robert Hamilton, in 1893-4, enquired into the condition of Dominica : its recommendations were distinctly more important in their character, and have been partly carried out. The earliest Commission to which I intend to allude was appointed in 1884: it made a report of the very highest political value: hardly any of its recommendations have been carried out. The report of the 1884 Commission remains to-day as true, as practical, and as urgent as on the day on which it was written. Until its recommendations have been carried out there is no need for further Commissions of enquiry into the condition of the West Indies. Throughout the whole of its three volumes, run, clear and strong, two great themes : to which the report recurs again and again. The first is the expediency of bringing the West Indian Colonies more closely together, which ought to commend itself to the whole House ; and the second is the desirability of Inter-Colonial Free Trade, with a common tariff for the whole of these Colonies—a tariff as low as is compatible with revenue purposes. This proposal ought at least to appeal to this side of the House.

If this House had given effect to the Report of 1884 it might never have been necessary to appoint the Commissions of 1894 and 1897. The West Indies do not live by one industry alone, however great; and I do want to persuade this House to believe in the vast importance of administrative reforms to render these Colonies stronger, more prosperous, more united, and more self-reliant.

Never will you achieve that end while you have each island, or each group of islets, under a separate Government from its neighbours. Islands, some of them not much larger than those I have the honour to represent in this House, certainly not richer—some of them not more populous—are burdened with all the paraphernalia of the Government of a first-class European State. Governors, Colonial Secretaries, Chief-Judges, Auditor-Generals, Commandants, Attorney-Generals, Solicitor-Generals, are simply jostling one another in the West Indies. Now, Governors and Chief-Judges are all very well in moderation, Attorney-Generals and Colonial Secretaries no doubt have their uses, even Solicitor-Generals are all very well in their proper place, and I would remind the House that I represent a constituency which is a good judge of Solicitor-Generals and their proper place.\* But surely one of each of these dignitaries would be sufficient for a population of one million and a half. At any rate, one law officer per 100,000 of the population is an altogether excessive allowance.

But that is not all. Each island, or each group of islets, has its own separate tariff, imposed im-

\* Buteshire. March 4, 1905:—Lamont, Norman, 1460.  
Salvesen, E. T. (Solicitor-General), 1426.

partially against foreign countries, against the Mother Country, against the other British West India Colonies, and in the case of the Windward Islands, even against the other islands in the same Colonial group. The West Indies are, in short, the Protectionists' Paradise. So many islands, so many scientific tariffs. But there is something wrong with the sequel. You cannot say : so many scientific tariffs, so many self-sustaining nations ; for the West Indies are the very reverse of self-sustaining, in any sense of the word. Let me give an instance or two of conflicting tariffs. Flour in Jamaica is subject to a duty of 8s. per barrel ; in Antigua the duty is 6s. 8d. per barrel ; in Trinidad it is 3s. 4d. In Jamaica the *ad valorem* duty imposed averages 17 per cent., in the Windward Islands  $7\frac{1}{2}$  to 15 per cent., while in Trinidad it averages 5 per cent. Trinidad is generally the best : I mean the lowest. I don't want to be controversial, and I know that the lowest is the worst in the opinion of Hon. Members opposite. How could any Archipelago prosper under such a system ? The 1884 Commissioners realised this very clearly, and wrote on p. 76 of their Report :\* "We would take this opportunity of stating that in our opinion it is very desirable to give as much uniformity as possible to the Customs tariffs in the various English West Indian Colonies. Special need for such uniformity has arisen with the recent increase of steam traffic. . . . Exporters in distant countries, as well as importers in each island, will appreciate a uniformity of tariffs which will enable steamers to land and ship cargo untrammelled by different

\* C. 3840.

complex calculations of duties and charges at each island."

The 1897 Commissioners say nothing about this, but on p. 21\* they remark : "It is of great importance that there should be cheap, regular and frequent means of communication between the different islands. . . . Such means of communication will assist, or even create, trade in local produce." What is the use of cheap and frequent means of communication among the islands, to promote trade, so long as they maintain mutually hostile tariffs to prevent it! However, years have passed; nothing has been done, and matters fiscal are in some respects worse than they were twenty-one years ago.

These are two of the evils of disunion : excess of officials, and an amazing chaos of tariffs.

A third is to be found in the inadequate and unsuitable character of the system of education. There are still no facilities for scientific or technical training, and it is only within the last seven or eight years that a start has been made in agricultural education, primary and secondary. The fact that there is any agricultural education at all is due to the Report of the 1897 Commission, and to the splendid work done by Sir Daniel Morris and his staff. The present system of agricultural instruction has two defects—it stops short at the secondary stage, and it is confined almost entirely to children of the peasant and artisan class. We want higher technical education for the captains and non-commissioned officers of West Indian industry, not only for the private soldiers.

Without proper educational facilities it is hopeless

\* C. 8655.

for us to compete with the skilled men turned out by America and Germany—men who have been through the splendid course at Audubon Park or at Magdeburg. Not only sugar, but cacao, forestry, fruit, stock-raising—all should be taught; and secondary schools and plantations alike manned with trained men.

Many Hon. Members seem to think that the backwardness of certain West Indian Islands in cultivation and in manufacture is due to the innate wickedness of the sugar planter. It is really due to the educational apathy of successive Governments here, and to the absence of a central Government there.

With a strong central Government it would be possible to institute what is the crying need of the sugar industry, and every other industry in the West Indies, a *technical university* to which existing secondary schools should be affiliated,

The 1897 Commission recommended the establishment of central factories; but I submit that it is folly to establish central factories for turning out a modern class of sugar until you have established central factories for turning out a modern class of *men*. West Indian factories are often magnificently equipped with machinery, but inadequately equipped with men. Excellent engineers are brought out from the shops of Derby, Glasgow, and elsewhere. But chemists for factory work and agricultural chemists are both far too scarce, and too highly paid to be else than scarce. In Louisiana four are employed in factories which in the West Indies would employ only one or none at all. It is impossible for the British West Indies to compete

with America and Germany until we have an ample supply of scientifically trained chemists for work in the factory and in the field.

No one Colonial Government can take up this great problem, but if there were a strong central Government for all the islands, it would be quite in its power to deal with what is their crying need, and set up a central university for all the West Indies. Such a university should take over the work of the present Imperial Department of Agriculture, and affiliate to itself the various secondary agricultural schools which have been established as a result of the recommendation of the 1897 Commission. It should also take over, for the purpose of teaching, the experimental stations which have for some years existed in the islands. At present the young men of the middle classes have only two professions to follow: they become either lawyers or doctors—in Colonies already glutted with law and medicine. They must have the opportunity of education in the great industries on which the prosperity of the Colonies must for all time depend.

I think that even the Right Hon. gentleman, the Secretary of State for the Colonies (Mr Lyttelton) would have appreciated the advantages of a Central Government while he was endeavouring to arrange the mail contract. I should like to congratulate him on having stumbled, I believe quite by accident, upon the right solution, viz., to have no contract at all. I have advocated this course for years, and I am quite sure that after a very short period of confusion or irregularity, it will be for the benefit of all concerned. It will pro-

bably result in more frequent and efficient services, and will cause no real injury to the shareholders of the Royal Mail Company. Mails will be carried by the various lines at least twice a week, instead of once a fortnight; the Royal Mail Company will earn that large share of the traffic to which the size and speed of its steamers entitle it, and the other lines will be encouraged to compete for a share by building better and faster boats, and improving the regularity of their service. In fact, there will be Free Trade in mail-service, and all the advantages that competition brings.

The case for administrative federation cannot be better put than by Sir Robert Hamilton, on p. 37 of his Report\* :—

“I am quite alive to the benefit which would result from a federation of all the West Indian Islands for those purposes which affect them as a whole, leaving local matters to be dealt with by the separate island legislatures. The time, however, has not yet arrived in the West Indies for the establishment of such a federation. . . . In the meantime, however, I believe that much advantage would accrue from an administrative union of all the British Antilles under one Governor-General. All communications to the Secretary of State from the various islands should go through him; and he should have certain administrative powers delegated to him by the Secretary of State to deal with matters beyond the competence of the individual administrators.”

I differ only from Sir Robert Hamilton in a point of detail, namely, the choice of a Capital. Wherever

\* C. 7477.

the capital of the Federated West Indies is located, I am quite clear that it should not be in any of the important islands of Jamaica, Trinidad, or Barbados, because it would undoubtedly create jealousy in the two islands not selected. It might well be placed in St Lucia, where it would compensate for the loss of the naval base. Better still if the Federal Government were located on a large steam yacht.

The 1897 Commissioners regard the necessity of a yacht, and the fact of the islands being separated by water, as the great argument against federation. It all depends on whether Britannia rules the waves or whether the waves rule Britannia. I, personally, believe that Britannia rules the waves, and that to the greatest maritime power in the world the calm and placid waters of the tropics form not an insuperable barrier, but a cheap and easy means of communication. Yet even the 1897 Commissioners come reluctantly to the conclusion that the smaller Colonies, Windward, Leeward and Barbados might be advantageously *brought under the same Government*.

The best government of all for the West Indies would be a strong central administration, under a benevolent despot. A benevolent despot is proverbially difficult to obtain. But it is still more difficult to obtain a benevolent oligarchy.

It is because several of the West Indian Governments very nearly approximate to the oligarchical form—either by the direct or indirect influence of the planting class—that no heed has been paid to the first, and by far the most important, recommendation of the 1897 Commission, viz.: “the

settlement of the labouring population as peasant proprietors." They recur to this again and again, just as the 1884 Commission recur to amalgamation.

Thus, on p. 81:—"No reform affords so good a prospect for the permanent welfare in the future of the West Indies as the settlement of the labouring population on the land as small peasant proprietors;" and on p. 36: ". . . the chief remedial measures which we have to suggest are . . . (2) the settlement of the surplus population on the land as peasant proprietors."

In spite of the neglect of Local Governments, notably in Trinidad, some progress has been made in this direction by means of the encouragement of certain planters, and by the natural energy and inclination of the people themselves. The Local Governments should have directed the gradual settlement of Crown lands with this view, and should (as the Commissioners suggested) have extended means of communication, *pari passu*, to enable the peasants to dispose of their produce. Instead of this, the Crown lands have hitherto been given out without any definite plan, and no means of communication have been provided. This has led to an uneconomic system of squatting, of no value to the Colony, of no assistance to the great established industries, and of little advantage to the squatters themselves.

Now, Sir, I have outlined the policy which I believe that this House should pursue in the West Indian Islands, and I thank the House for the courteous indulgence which it has shown to a new and nervous member. I ask for no grants of Imperial money. Rather do I deprecate them,

though I appreciate highly the spirit in which they have been given. But they resemble the method of the fabled pelican of the ancient heralds which draws, in her piety, blood from her own breast in order to feed her young. No one will deny that it is a policy generous to the point of quixotism. But it argues a certain lack of fertility of resource on the part of the pelican.

Well, Sir, I deprecate this pelican policy, and I advocate one which I believe will conduce far more largely to the lasting prosperity of these ancient Colonies.

## XII.

### MEMORANDUM PREPARED FOR THE COMMITTEE APPOINTED TO ENQUIRE INTO THE LABOUR QUESTION IN TRINIDAD, 18th July 1905.

(*Appendix B, p. 139.*)

#### GENERAL QUESTIONS CIRCULATED TO WITNESSES.

1. Length and nature of experience?
2. Average number of labourers employed throughout the year?
3. Approximate maximum and minimum; and at what period of the year is your demand greatest and least?
4. Proportions respectively of East Indian and others; also of free and indentured?
5. What do you consider the most effective class of labour?
6. Have you suffered from scarcity?
7. If not, is there any special reason for your immunity?
8. If you have, what, in your opinion, are the causes?
9. Has the scarcity increased in recent years?
10. Has it had any effect on the quantity and quality of your cultivation?
11. What steps have you taken to remedy the need?
12. What means would you suggest for increasing the supply?

13. Have you had any experience of importing labour from the other West Indies?
14. Could that source be profitably utilised?
15. Is the Immigration Tax fairly distributed?
  - (a) as between agriculturists of different kinds? and
  - (b) between agriculturists and the public?
16. If not, what are the defects, and what would you suggest?
17. In your opinion, is a tax on exportation the most suitable method of levy?
18. If not, what would you suggest?

*(Appendix A, p. 131.)*

EVIDENCE (WRITTEN) OF MR NORMAN LAMONT,  
M.P., D.L.

ON the 15th June, Mr Norman Lamont, M.P., D.L., of Knockdow, Argyle, and Palmiste, Trinidad, was written to, and asked to favour the Committee with his views, in writing, on the question before them, Mr Lamont and his manager both being then in England. Copies of Council Paper No. 20, of 1904, the General Questions, and the terms of reference were forwarded to Mr Lamont, who replied as follows:—

HOUSE OF COMMONS, S.W.,  
18th July 1905.

T. B. Jackson, Esq.

SIR,—I have to acknowledge receipt of yours of 15th ultimo, and express my regret that I had not time to reply by last mail. I also desire to record my thanks to your Committee for their courtesy in giving me, though absent from the Colony, this

opportunity of stating my views on the problem under their consideration.

GENERAL QUESTIONS.—(I.) My own personal experience dates back to January 1889, since when I have visited Trinidad on eleven other occasions, and I have kept in close touch with the affairs of Palmiste, even when absent.

(II., III., IV.) I cannot give accurate answers to these questions, having no returns by me. If the Committee desires answers, Mr Peet, my manager for Palmiste, will reach the island on 18th proximo, and give them any exact information required.

No labourers have been indentured since 1896, those then on the estate gradually diminishing in numbers as their period expired.

(V.) East Indian is by far the most effective class of labour.

(VI.) In spite of having no indentured labourers since 1902, I cannot say that we have at any time experienced a scarcity of labour.

(VII.) One of the main reasons which induced me to discontinue indenturing labour—in spite of the repeated remonstrances of my then manager—was the fact that we were giving unnecessary work for nine months in the year to labourers whose services we really only required in the three crop months. The cost of this “unnecessary work” would ruin any business, and I accordingly have endeavoured to stop it. This has largely been effected by :—

(a) Giving out two-thirds of the land to cane farmers.

(b) Inducing superfluous labourers to go and

plant rice, after crop, and encouraging them to return at the close of the next wet season.

- (c) Something has been done (but not nearly enough, and not one half of what is possible) in saving labour both in field and factory. This will be carried further for crop 1906, and I hope annually thereafter.
- (d) Housing accommodation, though not so good as I should like it, is extensive. Time-expired immigrants of good character and industrious habits, and their offspring, have been encouraged to remain on the estate, and the relations between employer and staff, on the one hand, and employed on the other, have always been happy and satisfactory. At Palmiste and Canaan, especially, the tendency to remain has been strong, and grandchildren of original immigrants are working there.
- (e) Labourers, particularly of the artisan class, are employed, whose homes are in San Fernando and Bamboo Village. Lots were sold to form the latter village, by Mr John Lamont, sixty years ago, with a view of creating a labour supply. It has certainly been successful. Rambert Village, on the other hand, is of little use as the inhabitants are idle and worthless.

All the above causes have doubtless co-operated towards our immunity from any scarcity of labour. The most important certainly is the very much reduced acreage worked by the estate. It should be noted that, at the very time when our last

indentured labourers' time was about to expire, we were still able to double, for the first time, our entire factory personnel, in order to work continuously night and day. This has since been maintained, but, as previously remarked, labour has been saved in several departments of the factory.

(VIII., IX., X., XI.) There having been no scarcity, these four questions need no reply.

(XII.) None.

(XIII., XIV.) I have had no experience of importing labour from the other West Indian Islands, nor do I believe that such a course would be likely to supply a scarcity, if, and so far as, such a scarcity anywhere exists. Without desiring to reflect on the character of the Creole working class, one may say that it is impossible to find a more industrious class of labourers, or a more desirable race for colonizing a tropical country like Trinidad, than the East Indians. And I trust that so long as the Government deem immigration expedient, they will continue to look to India as the source.

(XV.) (a) No. (b) Yes.

(XVI.) The principal defect is that the share of taxation falling on those planters who employ a large number of indentured labourers is far too *low* relatively to that imposed on planters employing but few or none at all. The tax falls on all exported sugar and all exported cacao alike, whether free-grown or not. This acts as a direct premium on bad management, and might so act on harsh treatment, since there is obviously no inducement to a planter to treat his people well, and to endeavour, when their time is up, to fix them as *free* labourers on his estates, if he can annually obtain importations

of more easily controlled *indentured* labourers, largely at other people's expense.

I do not desire to enter upon the abstract question of the ethical aspect of an indentured system. Broadly, it can be justified either on the urgent need of a country for additional population, or of the need of a great industry, vital to that country's welfare, for additional labour otherwise unobtainable. At any rate, in Trinidad the indentured system is seen at its best. But surely it ought never to be *compulsory* on anyone to employ indentured labour under very heavy penalties ; and that is what our present method of taxation almost involves, since no advantage is gained by a proprietor who has successfully managed his estate and fixed his labour—other than the non-payment of indenture fees, upkeep of hospital, etc., which amount to but a fraction of what he pays in export-duty to provide *others* with indentured labour.

Under the schemes proposed in Appendix A or B of Council Paper No. 20, of 1905, the evil would be greatly aggravated. Indeed, under B those reaping the direct advantage of directly employing indentured labour would only contribute £5,300, in addition to their share of the sum of £67,000 leviable alike on those employing and those not employing indentured labour.

Proprietors should surely be encouraged to work their estates with free labour at the earliest possible date, not only in their own interests but in the interests of the general taxpayer, who has to pay £16,000 a year, and of the labourers already in the Colony.

It is alleged, in reply to this, that when an estate ceases to obtain indentured labour it can only be worked by time-expired labourers drifting in from neighbouring estates ; an allegation which I submit is completely disposed of by the figures I quoted at the Agricultural Society's meeting on 7th February, showing that only about 15 per cent. of the labourers on (for example) the Palmiste estates were originally indentured elsewhere, and *that* after eight years had elapsed since immigration was discontinued. During this period £8,059 12s. was paid by me in export duty to provide other planters with indentured labour !

Now, if one desired to take an extreme view, it would be easy to argue that the remedy lies in exempting free-grown sugar and cacao from export duty altogether, and to prove that I (for example) paid for my indentured immigrants when they were under indenture, and that I now pay for the use of my time-expired immigrants—just as any shop-keeper pays for his—through my contribution to the £16,000 payable to the Immigration Fund out of General Revenue.

But I do *not* take an extreme view, and I admit that the large numbers of East Indians still employed on an agricultural estate, where immigration has been discontinued, render its owner liable to taxation somewhat *higher* than that imposed on the general taxpayer, although considerably *lower* than that levied on the proprietor still importing indentured immigrants.

(XVII., XVIII.). I would therefore suggest the following very simple method of arranging the cost of immigration so that it shall be equitably

allocated among the three classes who benefit in varying degrees:—

Total Cost . . . . .	£72,000
I. Government Contribution of one-third . . . . .	24,000
II. Produce Tax—Sugar, 50,000 tons at 4s. £10,000 Cacao, 8d. per 100 lbs. 12,500 Rum . . . . . 1,500	24,000
III. Indenture Fees—£8 on 3,000 . . . . .	24,000
	<u>£72,000</u>

Under this system, those employing considerable numbers of free coolies would pay appreciably for that benefit, and those preferring still to avail themselves of the easy discipline of compulsion could purchase that advantage at a further price.

An alternative would be to raise the *second* £24,000 by means of a land tax instead of a produce tax. It is of little importance which method is adopted, provided that the incidence of the indenture fees is as above.

It would not be out of place to remark here that it does not seem to be generally known or appreciated that, under our existing system, a large percentage of the sugar crop, grown with indentured labour, is annually sold for local consumption.

The export tax is thus lost on over 9,800 tons at 7s. 9d.—about £3,800. It would be but the merest justice, if the existing system of taxation is continued, to impose an *excise duty* (equivalent to the export duty) on all sugar sold locally, that has been *produced with the aid of indentured labour*, so as to cover those sugar owners who employ

indentured labour, and sell a good portion of their crop locally, thus evading the export tax.

With reference to the larger and interdependent questions of land settlement, sales of Crown-lands, and distribution of labour supply, I may perhaps venture to add a few remarks.

I find myself in general agreement with the paragraphs 19 and 20 (pp. 6 and 7), "Sale of Crown Lands" in the Council Paper above quoted, and in particular I am in very cordial concurrence with the quotation from Mr H. Warner there given.

Where, and in so far as, a scarcity of labour anywhere exists, such scarcity is pre-eminently due to the hopelessly unmethodical manner in which the Government has allowed its magnificent heritage of Crown-lands to be frittered away. There has been no perception of the vital principle of allotting lands, in the first place, only along projected lines (1) of railways, (2) of highways, (3) of branch roads. There has been no practice of the ordinary business principle of charging more for lands in specially favourable or accessible localities. There has only been a somewhat belated effort to make roads to the sold lands, instead of making sales and roads proceed *pari passu* along pre-arranged lines, and in accordance with a pre-arranged system. There has been absolutely no effort to promote particular industries in suitable localities. In these circumstances the East or West Indian purchasers can scarcely be blamed if, after buying land, they clear it of any valuable timber, and shortly depart, leaving it derelict.

There has been the less excuse for this inaction

or apathy on the part of the Government in that the Royal Commissioners of 1897 recur twice in their Report\* to this aspect of the question. I would direct the attention of your Committee to p. 14-15, par. 93 : "We think that the Governments-concerned might fairly be expected to encourage it (cane farming) by providing means of communication between the cane-growing tracts and the central factories, and by *offering every facility for the settlement of cane cultivators on suitable lands.*"

And especially let your Committee study, on pp. 36, 37, par. 281-289, and above all par. 286. Nothing has been done to carry out the policy indicated, and an impartial observer can scarcely refrain from remarking that while West Indian Governments have gladly availed themselves of the suggestions of the Commissioners where those suggestions involved pecuniary assistance from the Mother Country, they have not shown equal alacrity in adopting suggestions necessitating the thinking-out of a new policy for themselves.

It is very gratifying to observe that the last two years have seen a decided awakening on the part of the Trinidad Government to the importance of the issues involved. The prosperity of our various industries and the whole character of our future rural population both depend largely on a right system of dealing with Crown-lands. Crown-lands have indeed been "alienated." No serious person could claim that they have been "developed." The prospect of obtaining freehold land on ridiculously easy terms has seduced multitudes of industrious labourers from employment on the

\* C. 8655.

estates. I, for one, should be the last to regret this, if the exodus had been accompanied by the industrial organisation of the communities so formed. Under proper guidance, and with communications established, some of these communities might co-operate in growing, on their virgin lands, canes more abundant than the labour of the same individuals would have produced on the deteriorated lands of the estates. The "company" system of Fiji, so admirably described by His Excellency, Sir Henry Jackson, at the Agricultural Conference, would appear to be peculiarly adapted to cases such as this. Other settlements would apply themselves to the cultivation of cacao or minor crops. There would thus be no wastage of labour, but merely a transference from the existing method of employment to another method, equally productive, and economically sounder.

The first step would be to stop at once, and for the present, the further alienation of Crown-lands. The second to develop, on the lines above indicated, those already alienated. One very powerful engine for this purpose could be found in the Land Tax. A short Ordinance should be passed, doubling the Land Tax on all land abandoned, derelict, or not economically utilised. This should be applied to estates and squatter settlements alike. If, for two years in succession, there were failure to pay this duplicand, the lands in question should revert to the Crown. This would discourage alike speculative purchasers and idle squatters.

Such measures would tend to reduce the *drift* of labourers from the estates. They would certainly increase the productive power of the remainder who

would still prefer independence. But the real solution of the labour problem lies, as always, in the hands of the managers of the sugar estates. Something has been done, much may yet be done, to reduce labour in the factories. The Usine St. Madeleine has given a magnificent example. But this is as nothing compared with what remains to be achieved through the adoption of labour-saving implements in the field. When the ploughing of land is carried out, as implemental tillage would enable it to be carried out—and as, scientifically, it ought to be carried out—in the dry season, this alone will release many hands, now employed in forking, for other work. If your Committee are able to make enquiries in Louisiana, or any other cane-growing country where labour is dear, as to the average number of labourers employed *per acre*, they will, I am sure, be convinced that it is not only to the importation of an increased number of indentured immigrants, at other people's expense, that our local planters must look for a solution of the labour problem.

## XIII

### PROBLEMS OF THE CANE FARMER

(*A Speech delivered at a Meeting of the Cane Farmers' Association at Ste. Madeleine School, Naparima, Trinidad, 4th February 1907*)

THE Warden of Naparima was in the Chair, and a large gathering of planters and cane farmers was present.

After other planters had addressed the meeting, Mr Norman Lamont, M.P., said: I have, as President of the Cane Farmers' Association, great pleasure in being here to-night, if it were only to welcome the new spirit which seems of late to have entered into the relations between sugar planters and cane farmers. Instead of the old feeling of mutual antagonism and distrust, I find, after a lapse of two years, a feeling of mutual confidence and of mutual encouragement, and a desire for accommodating differences instead of exaggerating them.

I should like, on behalf of the Cane Farmers' Association, to express our acknowledgments to the representatives of the Planters for having met the Cane Farmers' representatives to discuss the many and varied points at issue. Both sides have reason to be grateful that their meeting has resulted

in the settlement of several of the most difficult questions. These arrangements will not only facilitate the more harmonious taking-off of the present crop, but, I hope, will lay the foundation of a more far-reaching agreement between cane farmers and planters in the future.

First, with regard to the sliding scale, for which I have contended throughout the whole of my connection with the Association : I am very glad to see it adopted, even though in a much modified form. Whether it is based on London or New York prices, I shall not cavil ; and if it is to be the scale for the whole of the Naparimas, it seems reasonable that it should be based upon American prices, because the great bulk of Naparima sugar goes, if not to the United States, at any rate to Canada, where quotations are based upon New York prices.

Then there is the question of maximum and minimum prices. This, as you know, has been all along the most difficult and thorny question of all ; and upon it, in 1905, the negotiations in London broke down.

There has been a great deal of misconception in Trinidad about these negotiations, which I should like to put straight. At those negotiations in London the representatives of the various Trinidad firms met together, when maximum and minimum prices were amicably discussed, and a draft scale drawn up. The scale and other terms of agreement were sent out to Trinidad, and everything seemed settled, when certain gentlemen in the Colony proposed to alter the terms of agreement so that no one should be allowed to pay more than the

sliding scale prices, but that anyone who liked should be allowed to pay less!

I need not say that this was not a sliding scale at all : it was a mere fraud—a snare and a delusion. I refused to have anything whatever to do with it ; and so these negotiations fell to the ground, and the sliding scale for the time was lost. Therefore, I am delighted to learn that the principle of the sliding scale has been adopted for the present crop, and a minimum price introduced.

I have all along contended that it was impossible for farmers to produce canes, at a profit, below 9s. per ton, and I intend to stick to that minimum price. At the same time, I entirely agree that, at the present price of sugar, the factories cannot really afford to pay 9s., and that they do so at a loss.

I think, therefore, that if the cane farmers could agree to sell their canes for this crop only to the factories at 8s. 6d., they would be well advised, if they desire the factories to continue. The planters are in a difficult place as well as the farmers, and if by taking a sixpence less farmers could help them to tide over the difficulty, they would be doing a good and patriotic thing for themselves and for the Colony.

The minimum price has been fixed only for the present year, and it is very important indeed that the minimum price should be fixed for two years in advance ; because, however important it may be for the farmer to know the minimum price during the present crop, it is still more important for him to know what will be the minimum price in the year when he will reap his canes. I hope that, with this new spirit informing their negotiations,

in the future some agreement as to that will also be made.

On these points, and on the question of rent and other matters, the farmers have had a good deal to complain of in past years. In many instances the factory managers have also had cause to complain. They have had a very irregular delivery of canes, particularly on Saturdays and Mondays ; and they have also, in many cases, had large quantities of unripe, or dirty, or stale canes brought to the factory, and in many instances cultivation has been defective.

These are all problems which they must seek to solve. One method would be through payment according to the contents of sugar in the cane ; but here, in Trinidad, payment for canes by sugar contents is a counsel of perfection which is absolutely unattainable.

I think a bargain might be struck ; and if planters, on their part, would agree to the fixing of a minimum price for two years in advance, farmers could not complain if a very strict regulation were drawn up, and rigidly enforced, under which any bad or rotten canes should be absolutely rejected, or only accepted at half or quarter price. And further, if any farmer's cultivation were so bad that his canes had to be entirely rejected, his contract should be immediately terminated—because it is only by more careful cultivation, and by raising a larger crop of cane from each acre, that farmers can hope to earn a higher income from their land. Therein lies the whole root of the matter.

Another change that might improve matters is co-operation amongst farmers themselves, especially

in cutting and carting, and in that direction farmers might do a great deal to help one another.

But there are other matters which affect the industry. There is the question of advancing money to farmers. From the point of view of the factory owner, I am inclined to think that if I am to advance money to farmers to grow cane, I should rather spend that money in cultivating the cane myself. Any advance should rather be given through agricultural banks, which are well known in other agricultural countries. There is no reason to believe that they would not be equally successful in Trinidad.

Then there is the question of wider railway extension throughout the cane-farming districts. Two years ago these questions were discussed in the Agricultural Society, which has since been put to death, apparently because of its crime of *lèse-majesté*, in discussing these highly important matters which ought to have been left for discussion and debate in the Legislative Council of the Colony! If, indeed, it be the fact that the Agricultural Society was put to death because it discussed these matters, then all I can say is that the Society died in a good cause, and that during its last few weeks of glorious life and of these memorable debates upon the cane-farming question, it did better work for the Colony than during all the years of dreary debates and of papers upon the "parasol ant" and upon the ravages of the "love vine" which occupied the greater portion of its previous somnolent existence.

Rumour has it that the Agricultural Society is about to be resuscitated upon a wider basis; but

you must remember that here, in Trinidad, events march but slowly, and that the Government of Trinidad is a creature whose period of gestation is preternaturally long. Whether it is a question of the revival of the Agricultural Society, or of railway extension, or of harbour improvement, the moment of consideration, the moment of decision, and the moment of action, are separated, not by months or years, but positively by decades.

But I hope that in this matter of the Agricultural Society, the painful period of gestation will be shortened as much as possible. If not, then here, in the Naparimas, at any rate, we have plenty of good material out of which we might constitute, on voluntary lines, an Agricultural Society for ourselves, which might not only give advice to planters and to farmers in the matter of cane farming, but also might render valuable assistance in other industries now rising up, which will have to be considered in the not remote future—if not as a substitute, perhaps as an adjunct to the sugar industry.

In conclusion, I wish to say that you have my best wishes for your success. This is my last visit to Trinidad in the capacity of a sugar manufacturer; and, in view of my intended abandonment of the Palmiste factory, it would be ridiculous and insincere to pretend to you that I have any particular faith in the future of the sugar industry here. The Brussels Convention has brought us, indeed, a little relief; but its existence is exceedingly precarious. The sugar industry in Trinidad is dying; and the object of my present visit is to insure that, at Palmiste, it shall have a decent and

effective funeral. It is possible that elsewhere in the island its existence may be prolonged where large estates are capable of still further expansion, with consequent reduction of cost of production. It is conceivable that where powerful companies have great financial resources, they may continue to run their factories, facing the probability of further immediate loss for the possibility of ultimate gain. If there be a future for the sugar industry, it is through cane farming that that future must be assured. But cane farmers, no less than sugar planters, must apply themselves to more skilful cultivation of the soil. I most sincerely hope that my prediction may be falsified, and that in the years to come there may be a measure of prosperity, not only for farmers and planters, but also for the staff and labourers who have worked so loyally, and often at exceedingly inadequate remuneration, during the dark days of the last twelve or fifteen years. Sugar will never again be king. Let us hope that it will still continue to hold a high position in that commonwealth of industries on which the agricultural welfare of the Colony will depend in the long years to come.

After further speeches, the chairman said that he hoped that, as Mr Lamont had advised them, they would co-operate, as the lack of co-operation was the chief trouble with farmers and planters.

The following resolution was then moved, seconded, and carried unanimously: That we farmers take this opportunity of expressing our heartfelt gratitude to Mr Lamont, M.P., for his attitude towards the cane-farming industry; and also our deep regret for the circumstances which

have caused his abandonment of the sugar industry ; but sincerely wish him success, both in his life political and in his further agricultural endeavours in the Colony.

Mr Lamont, in reply, said : I am deeply touched by your unanimous adoption of this resolution, and need hardly say that it is to my own infinite regret that I have been compelled, after prolonged and mature consideration, to decide to abandon the Palmiste factory. I have done my best to be a fair and impartial friend to the cane farmers of Naparima, and you have recognised that by asking me, a planter, to be the President of your Association. If, in the future, though no longer a sugar manufacturer, I can in any way help you, it will be my pleasure no less than my duty, to do so.

## XIV

### THE WEST INDIAN PROBLEM: A REPLY TO “IMPERIALIST”

(Reprinted from *The Contemporary Review*, November 1907)

A BRILLIANT writer, who drapes rather than cloaks his identity under the pseudonym of “Imperialist,” has discoursed on “The Problem of the West Indies” in the July number of the *Fortnightly*. He makes the astonishing suggestion that we should surrender our West Indian Islands, comprising, as they do, some of the oldest possessions of the British Crown, to the United States, receiving in exchange the Philippine Archipelago. And he seeks to justify this amazing proposition of Vaudoux-worship up-to-date, this sacrifice of our children on the altar of a phil-Oriental Imperialism, on the ground that the Antilles are now, and ever will be, a source of weakness, “a heel of Achilles” to the British Empire. Froude’s “Bow of Ulysses” remains, indeed, yet unstrung; an arrow from the quiver of a modern Paris, winged by the *Fortnightly Review*, has penetrated the one vulnerable spot of our British Achilles.

Here is “Imperialist’s” analysis of the situation: “The ills from which the West Indies suffer have

their rise in purely economic causes." "It is time that the people of Great Britain began to face the unpleasant fact that the West Indies cannot hope to see their ancient prosperity restored to them so long as they continue part and parcel of the British Empire." "The question from first to last is purely one of economics." We can, in fact, neither help the islands on the way to prosperity, nor defend them in their adversity. It is inconsistent with the general scheme of Imperial defence that we should detail either troops or ships-of-war for West Indian service. Their potential value is so insignificant, that the expediency of retaining even one of these islands as a coaling-station on the future highway to the Pacific is ignored by "Imperialist." The "Heel of Achilles" being thus stricken, locomotor ataxy supervenes; the whole Empire suffers; amputation is the remedy.

Economic causes have indeed been largely responsible for the financial depression under which the British West Indies have now for a quarter of a century been suffering; and the gradual but continuous decline of the sugar industry has been the principal factor among them. But wealth is not all, and it is only by neglecting, with "Imperialist," the importance of the social amelioration, slowly but steadily being effected by British administration, that it is possible to reach his conclusion that millennial blessings would accompany the annexation of the islands to the United States.

His argument for the exchange of Colonies may be thus stated. The Filipinos will attain under British rule that Nirvana of peace without payment and plenty without labour which "Imperialist"

alleges to be their ideal, an ideal which both Spanish and American institutions have hitherto failed to provide. Englishmen are to steer the ship of state; Chinese immigrants are to man the oars; the Filipinos are to be ferried tranquilly as saloon passengers down the river of life. In the West Indies it is otherwise. Here the Union Jack has failed to produce either peace or plenty. Under the Stars and Stripes old dreams of Eldorado will at once materialise.

American annexation might indeed irrigate our West Indian Islands with wealth from that wonderful stream of capital which has been flowing into Puerto Rico ever since 1900. But it would be imprudent to prophesy that results, equally satisfactory, would follow. In Puerto Rico there are 589,000 whites, against only 363,000 black and coloured persons: the grant of representative institutions has therefore been possible. In addition to the influx of wealth, the marked superiority of American over Spanish rule has caused all classes and races to acquiesce in the transfer of allegiance. Now, "Imperialist's" suggestion is that "no attempt would be made by America to treat the British West Indian Islands as a single entity." It would be recognised that "the interests of the Colonies are individual, not collective, and the West Indies would be converted into a number of *States*, each one of which would possess large autonomous powers." This grotesque proposition would involve the admission into the Union of at least six new States. Each would have a population in which the black and coloured element outnumbered the whites in the ratio

of perhaps fifteen, or even twenty, to one. All six combined would have a total population of about 1,600,000 ; or rather less than the State of Mississippi. The statesmen of America, although "understanding the colour question more perfectly than those of any other country in the world," would most certainly not accept "Imperialist's" doctrine, that the possession of these six new black States "would import no new and troublesome factor into their home politics." At any rate, America has hitherto evinced no special desire to incorporate new "black" States into the Union, despite the standing temptation of the disorder and isolation of Hayti. Even Puerto Rico and Cuba, though the black population is a minority in each, remain outside the charmed circle of "States": one as a colony in the cradle, the other as a republic in leading strings. Consideration of the difficulties encountered in applying to the nine millions of existing black American citizens the principles of free Republican institutions compels the admission that American statesmen are wise to pause before augmenting that number.

The views of the 1,500,000 black and coloured subjects of King Edward who, within recent years, have provided the West Indies with a Chief-Judge and an Attorney-General of marked ability, might be translated into something more than mere passive resistance were they to learn that it was seriously proposed to deliver them over to the delights of lynch-law, and to the practical exclusion from all positions of any importance, administrative, social or professional, which prevails throughout the Southern

States. The 150,000 East Indians in Trinidad, Jamaica, and St Lucia would unhesitatingly select instant repatriation at the public expense rather than surrender the high hopes which they have formed, and indeed are rapidly realising, of advancement in every field of Colonial life.

The other side of the picture is no less open to criticism. How would the annexation of the Philippine Islands fit in with our Imperial organisation? No patriotic Briton will deny that, with our national genius for the government of alien races, Great Britain could surmount the undoubted difficulties of administering the affairs of 7,500,000 Filipinos. But even "Imperialist," with all his contempt for Federation, hesitates to suggest that the task would be simplified by governing the new possessions as half-a-dozen separate Colonies. Mr James F. Smith might find his task facilitated by the assistance of a trained British Civil Service. Trained British civil servants might possibly consider that Mr James F. Smith did not conform to their preconceived ideas of a Governor-General. But they would hardly suggest the abolition of the Governor-Generalship. Yet the north of Luzon is as far from the south of Mindanao as is Trinidad from Jamaica, or the "Isle of Man from Madeira"; there are under 200 miles of railways, and there are some 3,000 other islands intervening. We should not then avoid the necessity of providing a Central Government for the group, and subordinate Governments for the Provinces. Nor should we in the East Indies escape the bogey of sugar, the chief "economic difficulty" which has harassed us in the Antilles, for the sugar production

of the Philippine Islands is not unequal to that of our West Indian Islands.

We may leave, then, the destiny of the Philippines to be fashioned in the crucible of the future—whether the cunning alchemist shall come from America or from Japan; and putting aside the chimerical proposal of an excambion, consider the “Problem of the West Indies” as it presents itself for practical solution to British statesmanship in the opening years of the twentieth century.

Unhesitating acceptance may be given to three propositions laid down by “Imperialist”; first, “that the present state of the West Indies is undeniably unsatisfactory”; secondly, that “the time has come when action of some sort or another must be taken if their salvation is to be effected”; and thirdly, “that the proposal of the *Times* correspondent, to amalgamate the West Indies with Canada, could not be effected by any conceivable system of governmental machinery.” But when he asserts that “the period of Britain’s usefulness (in the Antilles) is ended; her *raison d’être* has vanished; it is time for her to withdraw,” agreement ceases. And when he dilates upon the “unalterable and adverse conditions” which preclude our developing the islands in a satisfactory manner,” he uses a phrase of which even one of our “colossally ignorant legislators” might be ashamed. Adverse, yes; but unalterable, a thousand times no! Too many administrators—arm-chair and otherwise—have, however, acted upon “Imperialist’s” view. The error which vitiates the whole of his arguments is crystallised in the assumption that “the interests of the Colony are individual,

not collective"; an assumption so thoughtless and so shallow as to be totally unworthy of its gifted author. It would be rash to predicate of any countries, however various, that they had no collective interests. All nations have a common interest in peace, trade, hygiene, communication. Given a chain of tropical islands—each, with one exception, visible from its nearest neighbours—similar in climate, in the preponderance of its negro population, in loyalty to the throne, the presumption is that this list of common interests might be considerably extended. The whole crux of the problem of Federation lies in distinguishing the "collective" from the "individual" interests, in allocating the former to the Central Government, and in delegating the latter to local administrations.

"Imperialist," in referring to the West Indian Debate, which took place in the House of Commons on the 17th May 1905, says that Federation was then put forward as a remedy "calculated to cure all the ills to which the West Indies are heirs," and defended principally on the score of the economy which it would effect in the cost of administration. A perusal of "Hansard" scarcely bears this out. Federation was advocated, not as a panacea, but as a condition precedent to health. There is doubtless an excess of highly-paid officials in the West Indies. Their reduction was defended less on the score of economy than of efficiency, of unity, and of a common policy. Even though Federation were to cost *more* than the present system or systems of administration, it would be none the less desirable.

"Imperialist" admits that "the West Indies are

not one entity now, and lack any unifying influence which is likely to make them one in the future." That very influence will be found in Federation against which he so vigorously protests.

It may be useful to define what is here meant by Federation. No responsible man, acquainted with the West Indies, would seriously propose to set up a central elective Parliament. The Federal authority should consist of a Governor-General and executive officers appointed by the Secretary of State, and of a Legislative Council, nominated to represent the several Colonies. It should control Defence, Customs and Excise, Inter-insular Communications, Higher Education, the Imperial Department of Agriculture (after the expiry of the Imperial Grant), Quarantine Regulations, and any other "collective interests." There should also be a Federal Court of Appeal.

The Provincial affairs of the six federated Colonies would continue to be transacted locally, under the guidance of an Administrator or Lieutenant-Governor. The legislative powers of the local councils being limited to matters specifically reserved to them, it would be safe to increase gradually their elective element, though their constitutions should still vary, as at present, in accordance with local conditions and political maturity. In some instances a glorified County Council would meet all real requirements.

The Federal Government would not lack work ready to its hand. Its Financial Officer would find in the six Colonies a chaos of different tariffs. So many Colonies, so many different scales of duties.

In the Windward Colony, indeed, each island has a distinct and separate system of import duties, imposed impartially on goods coming not only from foreign countries, from the United Kingdom, or from the other British West Indian Colonies, but even from the other islands in the same group. The gradual assimilation of these conflicting tariffs could only be effected by a Central Government, and would do much to facilitate the movement and interchange of commodities among the various islands.

/ Far wider possibilities are opened up by the question of Free Trade between the West Indies and Canada. The *Times* correspondent, on the 24th August 1905, did good service in ventilating this question. Canada exports timber, flour, oats, salt fish, and dairy produce, for all of which commodities there is, in the Antilles, a large demand. The West Indies, in their turn, produce sugar, cacao, fruit, coconuts, cotton, to say nothing of asphalt and oil. Each needs the market of the other. Their exports are complementary, not competitive. Neither, therefore, desires protection against the other. Why not Free Trade? Early in 1900 overtures, in fact, were made by the Canadian Government for the establishment between Canada and Trinidad of absolute reciprocal Free Trade, except in alcohol and tobacco. Downing Street gave no sign. Trinidad lay under the spell of those who chanted the praises of Preferential Trade with the United States. The proposals, unhappily, fell to the ground. Had import duties been mutually abolished, a trade, already considerable, would have rapidly doubled in volume, and

Canada, doubtless, would have felt encouraged to enter into similar relations with other West Indian Colonies. The negotiations, indeed, of separate Free Trade Treaties with eight several Colonies, each with a different tariff, is a task that might well appal even a Cobden. But how vastly the work would be simplified if the Federated Dominion of Canada could deal direct with a Federated Colony of the West Indies!

The control of Higher Education and the development of Agriculture, again, are matters which can only be satisfactorily administered by a Central authority. Nothing that Mr Chamberlain accomplished for the West Indies has been of greater benefit than his creation of the "Imperial Department of Agriculture." Sir Daniel Morris has worked wonders in the Islands under his care. The advancement of science in agricultural practice, the promotion of agricultural education in secondary schools, the introduction of new and promising industries, like cotton and rubber, or of improved varieties of cane, are due, and almost solely due, to Sir Daniel Morris and his able lieutenants. The stagnation, in these respects, of Trinidad, has been the index to the progress of these islands in which the work of the Imperial Department has been carried on. Even Trinidad is now being provoked into the path of agricultural progress by the energetic spirit of her Governor, Sir Henry Jackson.

But the Imperial Department is not enough. The time has now come for a further step. One of the greatest needs of the West Indies is a University of Tropical Agriculture, to take up, to develop, and

to extend the scope of the work of the Department. We cannot rest content with the provision of travelling experts and advisers trained at Cambridge. We must be able to train at a West Indian University not only secondary teachers, but proprietors and managers, in science as applied to the agricultural and horticultural industries of the tropics, and thus open out both a new career and a new prospect of prosperity. Meanwhile, the Department might well enter into negotiations with such an institution as the University College at Reading, which provides an admirable horticultural training for practical men.

Another benefit accruing from Federation would be its effect of Mutual Insurance of the various islands. Jamaica, as "Imperialist" truly says, is relying perhaps too exclusively on the banana, cultivated for American markets. In Barbados the staple industry is still sugar—the perpetual football of our party politics. Grenada is surpassing the prosperity of her old sugar days by the cultivation of cacao. Though in each case the Imperial Department is gradually introducing subsidiary industries, still, the prosperity rests, in each, to too large an extent upon a single crop. Its failure, from whatever cause, would be disastrous to the Colony's finance. With a common Exchequer for Federal purposes, mutual support would be rendered by each to all, and by all to each.

One word as to Defence. Safeguarding the islands as against the United States is, at the present time, happily superfluous; as against any other country, their best defence will be found in a strong

Atlantic fleet, not in a weak West Indian squadron. The late Government was amply justified in a withdrawal of the naval and military forces from the islands. But at a time when earthquakes, eruptions, hurricanes and riots have followed each other in rapid succession, it is, to say the least, imprudent to leave the islands to the protection of a single cruiser. Surely the time has come when our rulers should recognise the expediency of having, in addition to our ships of war, patrol vessels for the policing of outlying portions of the Empire. Some of the moribund cruisers at present gracing the lochs and kyles of the West of Scotland might employ an honoured old age in patrolling the Caribbean. They are, of course, unfit to meet an enemy in time of war, and their names would not figure on the Active List of the Navy, but they would carry men and armament sufficient to quell a native riot, such as occurred in Trinidad in 1903, in British Guiana in 1905, or in St Lucia in 1907. We should then be enabled to bring succour to our fellow-subjects in time of trouble instead of being compelled to rely on chance and the charitable intervention of a foreign Power. The cost of this small squadron should be defrayed partly from Imperial, partly from Colonial, funds. The defence of the Colonies would certainly not be weakened even if their contribution to the maintenance of the patrol squadron involved the disbandment of the somewhat variegated Corps of Yeomanry and Volunteers, upon which their security at present depends. Sentiment, in the opinion of "Imperialist," is the sole obstacle to our cession of the West Indies to the United

States. Others, not less imperialist, believe that Honour also forbids. If British statesmanship has failed up till now to restore prosperity to our most ancient Colonies, that is no reason for the abandonment of the task. Past failure is the greatest incentive to present endeavour and future success. The real solution of the West Indian problem is not to be sought in a policy of "scuttle"; it is to be found in the application of new men, new minds new methods.

## XV

### LETTER TO THE TRINIDAD WORKING MEN'S ASSOCIATION

HOUSE OF COMMONS,  
17th June 1909.

THE SECRETARY,

*Working Men's Association of Trinidad.*

SIR,—The *Port-of-Spain Gazette* of 30th May publishes a letter to you from the Secretary of the Agricultural Society, in which my name is mentioned.

As a member of that Society, I write to state that the inference intended to be drawn from the abandonment of Palmiste is wholly erroneous.

The factory was not abandoned because I employed free labour, but because I was compelled to pay £1,000 a year to provide other planters with indentured labour which I did not myself require.

If the cost of importing indentured immigrants had been levied, as in justice it should be levied, on those who employ them, the Palmiste factory would still be running; and a sum of £20,000 would be annually circulated in wages which is now lost to the Colony.—Yours faithfully,

NORMAN LAMONT.

## XVI

### THE KING EDWARD MEMORIAL

(*A Speech delivered at Port-of-Spain, 28th April 1911*)

His Excellency Sir George Le Hunte occupied the Chair, and the Archbishop of Port-of-Spain moved :—“ That, in the opinion of this Meeting, His late Majesty’s name should be permanently associated with some public memorial in Trinidad.”

Mr Lamont said :—

Your Excellency, Your Grace, ladies and gentlemen, in seconding the resolution which has been proposed in such felicitous terms by the Archbishop, I do not intend to detain you long in restating a case already so admirably put. I do want, however, to say that there are, to my mind, two considerations, one general and the other particular, which seem to make the case for the resolution overwhelmingly strong. In the first place, I am inclined to be in favour of almost any memorial whatsoever in the island of Trinidad, because there are here so few memorials of any kind. I do not know whether it is because our hearts are so cold, and we forget so quickly, that we erect no memorials to our departed good and great, or whether it is because our hearts are so warm that we need no memorials to remind us. The fact remains that in spite of the respectable

antiquity to which our island story has now attained, and its more than usual interest, Trinidad has failed to do anything to perpetuate the memory of her heroes. Trinidad has been a British Colony now for six reigns, and I believe I am right in saying that, except for the Victoria Institute, there is no memorial of any of our Sovereigns. Then, apart from individuals or residents here, there have been among our local rulers many noteworthy and eminent men: men such as Abercromby, Picton, Woodford, Harris. Yet, with the exception of Lord Harris, we have done no more than to pay them the somewhat inexpensive compliment of naming our streets after them. Then in the case of the last, and perhaps the greatest, of our Governors who have passed away—I mean Sir Henry Jackson—who gave such brilliant services to Trinidad, and indeed may be said to have given his life to Trinidad, some permanent monument should surely be erected to perpetuate the memory of those services, not only among us, but among those who will come after. The City of Port-of-Spain has wealth beyond the dreams of Raleigh's Eldorado. Its health has been declared, on the highest authority, to be equal to that of any tropical city. It is beautiful beyond compare among the capitals of the West Indies. But in one particular it excites the unfavourable comment of visitors; and that is the absence of any statues or other memorials of its history. Far smaller cities on the Spanish main, even the capitals of some of the smaller West Indian islands, are richer in memorials of a no more glorious past; even Bridgetown has its statue of Nelson. Upon general grounds alone,

therefore, as I said, I should be in favour of this resolution, as marking the beginning of a movement for the embellishment of this city, and as a beginning of the recognition of the importance of marking the epochs of history by commemorating the men who helped to make those epochs.

If, then, I am in favour of the resolution upon general grounds, how much easier is it to commend it to you upon the particular ground of a Memorial to our late Sovereign Lord, King Edward VII.! King Edward's reign, as the Archbishop said, was all too short. King Edward was less well-known throughout his Colonial Empire than the present King, yet his services were of the vastest importance to us in Trinidad, and to our fellow-subjects throughout the world, because the late King made the British monarchy a living and vital fact to the British people. Queen Victoria, during the latter half of her long reign of sixty-three years, lived in such seclusion and retirement, that Her Majesty may be said to have become rather an honoured tradition and a venerated institution to her people than a living reality. But King Edward, by his many-sided activities, his frequent public appearances, his warm and generous sympathy to those in sorrow and affliction, his love for manly British sports, brought the fact of the Monarchy home to the humblest. I shall not soon forget the visits which the King paid to the bedside of my late Chief, Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, and the cheering effect which they had upon the dying Prime Minister. In Art, the King's influence was great; and the effects of his personal interest and co-operation with Mr Harcourt, when First

Commissioner of Works, in the gradual beautification of London, have no doubt been brought home to those of you who have had the opportunity of visiting the Metropolis from time to time. In politics, as His Grace has reminded you, the position of a Constitutional King is necessarily a very difficult one. I should be inclined to say that the greater the ability of the King, the greater the difficulty of his position: for, though he may see around him the possibility of various lines of action, yet he must ever restrain himself within the narrow limits imposed by the Constitution. It cannot be denied that King Edward, in various respects, extended the sphere of action of the Monarchy beyond the bounds observed in the three previous reigns; yet he always did so wisely, with good effect, and with the entire approbation of his people. His political influence made itself felt in three principal lines. First of all, you all remember the beneficent influence which King Edward exerted towards the conclusion of peace, and in favour of that general scheme of pacification between Boer and Briton, which, to my mind, will rank in history as the greatest achievement of a great reign. In Ireland, the King's personality evoked an altogether new spirit, which, embodied in such men as Lord Dudley, Mr Wyndham and Sir Antony MacDonnell, was able to bring about a settlement of the long-standing difficulties of the Irish Land question. In the third place, His Majesty's influence was strongly felt in the domain of foreign affairs: an influence exerted during the visits which he made to the rulers of France, Russia, Spain, Norway, Denmark, Austria and other countries. Those

visits were always marked by Agreements leading to the settlement of long-standing and difficult disputes. Those visits and Agreements paved the way for that new spirit of peace and concord which alone has rendered possible that outburst of world-wide enthusiasm for the new arbitration movement which has been brought into being through the statesmanship of President Taft and Sir Edward Grey. Thus it was that King Edward left the British Monarchy stronger even than he found it ; and more deeply enshrined in the hearts and affections of all his people, for it is not only a Bond of Union, but a Bond of Peace. It is not, therefore, "lest we forget" that I commend this resolution to you : it is rather lest those who come after should never know that we remembered.

## XVII

### ON THOROUGHNESS

*(An Address to the Port-of-Spain Brotherhood,  
Sunday, 14th May 1911)*

I ESTEEM it a high compliment to have been invited to take the chair here to-day, for I have watched with great interest the career of the "Brotherhood" during the past twelve months, and have learnt with pleasure of the rapid increase of your membership, and of the most worthy objects which you have set before you. I know the duty of a Chairman too well to detain you with a long speech; indeed, I have come here more as a learner than as a teacher; but, before I call upon the speaker of the day, you will expect me to say a few words. I noticed on the little membership card just put into my hand that the keynote of your Association is struck in the words "Mutual Help." I am very glad to know that. The mere fact that you have taken "mutual help" as your motto shows a distinct advance. Nearly every British or foreign writer or traveller of note who has come amongst us in the West Indies has said that one of our greatest needs is self-help, and that we are unable to help ourselves, and look always to the Home Government or to the Local Government to do

things for us which we ought to do for ourselves. The "Brotherhood" has evidently taken that lesson to heart, since you have set before you the second step, namely, mutual help. You are evidently able to help yourselves, since you are now setting out to help one another. You are quite right to recognise the importance of mutual help. It is important everywhere, but it is especially important here, because we have here very little co-operation of any kind. There is too little mutual help, or co-operation, among our industrial workers, among our artisans; too little among our cane farmers, and perhaps too little even in more exalted circles. If you look into the foundations of the prosperity of the little country of Denmark you will find them based upon the mutual help and co-operation of its workers. By co-operative purchase the Danish workers obtained cheaper and better supplies. By co-operative sale, regular delivery had been made to customers of a standardised quality of goods, and thus better prices had been obtained, and a larger field opened to the exports of that country. The workers of Denmark took for their motto the grand words:—"Each for all, and all for each." These are words which your Brotherhood may well take to heart.

I rejoice, then, to see that you have taken the obligation of mutual help upon you, but I want to put a further consideration before you. If I may give you a watchword for the coming week, I should like to give you the word *Thorough*. Now I know that I am privileged at this moment to be addressing an absolutely representative meeting of the workers in all trades of this great town of

Port-of-Spain, and I should be glad if I could say something that will be of use. And, to do that, I must be entirely frank. I need hardly assure you that, in any remarks which I may make, I do not desire to give offence to anyone. You know me well enough to know that I do not desire to do that. I have known Trinidad for very many years now, and there is one thing that has always struck me very much : I mean the lack of thoroughness, the absence of finish, the want of completeness about much of the work done here. It was said the other night in the Princes Building, in one of the speeches in support of the proposed Memorial to King Edward VII., that the workers in Trinidad are as good as any in the world, "when they are properly taught from the beginning." That is absolutely true. But, at the same time, men in Trinidad often do not put their best work into a job. They are often content to leave it half done, or three-quarters done. They give their second best work, instead of their best. There often seems to be no real pride in doing good work for good work's sake. That is one of the most tremendous obstacles to the progress of workers here individually, as well as to our progress as a Colony. Be thorough, therefore. I should like to see set up in large letters, over the entrance to every factory and workshop here, the words : "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might." It is of no use knowing how to do good work if you do not take the trouble to do it. I could give you countless instances of work half-done in Trinidad, but I am going to refrain from the temptation to do so ; because I am sure

that you will be able to recollect many such instances—not, of course, in your own work—but at least in that of your friends! So it is that we so often see a good ship spoiled for want of a ha'porth of tar. I want you to see that your work is perfect before it leaves your hands. We read in the first chapter of Genesis, that, at the Creation, "God saw the world, that it was good." If He had *not* seen that it was good, He would have made another. You may get no more money for doing good work, you may reap no immediate reward, but your reward will come in your own inward consciousness, in the greater confidence of your employers, in steadier and larger employment, and doubtless also for the better price which you will be able to earn for future work. I want you therefore to take greater pride in your work.

Now, I am very proud of my connection with Trinidad, and I have tremendous faith in her future. We have had, in the last few years, splendid facilities provided for the technical training of our workers, we have a great scheme on hand for the extension of our railways, we see new varieties of crops being raised, we see new industries being started, and there may be still further developments, of which we can now scarce see beyond the threshold. I want you men of Trinidad to avail yourselves of these opportunities which are being offered, and are going to be offered, to you. Do not allow others to come in and take them from you. Be ready when these opportunities come, and rest assured that you men on the spot will get the first chance at them, if only your employers know that they can rely upon you to put your best work into

your job. Do not only do good work when someone is standing by to see that you do it, but do good work when you are left to yourselves, and because you would be ashamed that any member of the Port-of-Spain Brotherhood should turn out bad work. And if your Brotherhood, which has taken as its ideal "mutual help," adds this motto of "thoroughness" to its standard, I am sure that it will not be long before the whole Colony of Trinidad, and even a wider field than that, is very proud of you, of the work which you have done, and of the work which you are going to do.

## XVIII

### THE WEST INDIAN RECOVERY

(*Reprinted from The Contemporary Review,  
February 1912*)

THE idea of West Indian depression is very deeply implanted in the public mind. The prolonged misfortunes of the sugar industry touched a chord of sympathy which has never ceased to vibrate. The frequent appointment of Royal Commissions, and the exceptional remedies recommended in their Reports, and adopted by the Imperial Government, created a widespread impression that distress in the West Indies was universal, permanent, and inevitable. A sensational sequence of hurricanes, earthquakes, and volcanic eruptions accentuated the popular despair.

It is time that this despondent belief began to be modified. It would, indeed, be premature to predict the advent of a West Indian "boom," but if the steady recovery of the last few years continues, a very real prosperity is approaching.

In bringing about this satisfactory change many causes have combined. The removal of the sugar bounties effected by the Brussels Convention of 1903 has undoubtedly been one of them. If it has not done all that was expected of it by its supporters

in steadyng the price of sugar in the world's markets, even its opponents cannot deny that the Convention has given to planters a new confidence that they cannot be undersold by State-subsidised competitors. With that confidence has come willingness to invest, or ability to borrow, the sums periodically needed for keeping machinery abreast of the times.

Even more than to the Convention, however, credit is due to the preference given by Canada to West Indian sugars at a time when the United States market was suddenly closed to them through the more favourable treatment accorded to the produce of Puerto Rico, Cuba, Hawaii, and of the Philippines. Together, Convention and Preference have arrested the decline of the British West Indian sugar industry. So long as both Convention and Preference continue, there is reason to hope that where sugar estates are favourably situated, well equipped, economically managed, and properly cultivated, a modest return may yet be earned upon capital invested.

But, after all, sugar no longer reigns supreme ; and if the new West Indian prosperity is more widely diffused among all classes than was ever the old, the reason is to be found in the fact that it is not based upon the success of a single cultivation. Other crops have increased both their actual and their relative importance. Entirely new industries have entered the field. Under the Commissionership of Dr Francis Watts, C.M.G., the Imperial Department of Agriculture has continued its excellent system of experiment, demonstration, and advice. That its teaching has not fallen on

deaf ears is evident from the remarkable agricultural progress in the Leeward and the Windward Islands.

Aided by the British Cotton-growing Association, the Department has resuscitated, after a lapse of half a century, the important Sea-Island Cotton industry. In some of the smallest and poorest islands, where a new industry was most needed, a long-staple cotton is now being regularly produced, equal to any in the world. In the island of Antigua, in February 1911, there was held an Exhibition under the combined auspices of the Imperial Department and of the local Agricultural and Commercial Societies. Not only were the exhibits of great variety, but of high excellence. The keenness of competition, and the alertness to new ideas, of the Antiguan planters, gave some clue to the striking success of the Gunthorpe's Central Sugar Factory, and explained how it is that this small island is leading the British West Indies in green-crop manuring as well as in implemental tillage.

In St Vincent, again, an altogether new spirit prevails. Instead of the old, lazy, conservative doctrine of "Let us do as our fathers did," planters are keenly alive to the advantages of keeping pace with the developments of modern agriculture, both in theory and in practice. Admirable work is being done in agricultural education. Under the enterprising and prudent guidance of Administrator the Hon. C. G. Murray, much has been accomplished within the last three years to second the efforts of the planters. By the Agricultural Products Protection Ordinance of 1909, predial larceny has been checked, and a

co-operative cotton-buying scheme started at the Government Ginnery. This has proved a great success. The important local industry of arrowroot has been assisted by means of a sort of "valorisation" plan, and by the establishment of an advertisement fund. Satisfactory results are following from the acquisition, under the Land Settlement Ordinance, of derelict estates by the Government, and the location of smallholders upon them.

In several of the islands rubber plantations have been established. Tobago is perhaps the farthest advanced in this respect, but Dominica and Trinidad are not far behind. The total acreage of rubber planted is undeniably small as compared with the enormous area in the East; and only a limited number of trees have arrived as yet at the size or age for tapping. Nevertheless, the cultivation exists and expands. And the fact that the scattered West Indian rubber plantations consist, not exclusively of *Hevea*, but also of *Castilloa* and *Funtumia*, may in the future be a valuable safeguard against the attacks of those fell diseases which are ever most liable to occur where vast contiguous areas are cultivated continuously under a single crop.

In Trinidad a notable advance has been made both in agricultural and in technical education. For some years after the creation of the Imperial Department of Agriculture, there is no doubt that Trinidad suffered by being excluded from its sphere of influence. But since the creation in 1908 of a local Department of Agriculture, with Professor Carmody at its head, valuable work has been accomplished. With a threefold organisation

consisting of a Department of Agriculture, a Board of Agriculture, and an active Agricultural Society, it is inevitable that some overlapping and occasional friction should occur. But the measures necessary for the harmonisation of the conflicting elements are obvious, and they are simple. Here, too, planters are rapidly awaking to the imperative need for modern methods. The lectures upon the scientific cultivation of cacao delivered by Mr O. W. Barrett, of the United States Department of Agriculture, during his visit to Trinidad in 1907, have had a remarkable and lasting influence in this direction. The useful experiments of the local Department at the "River Estate" are closely followed; while the original research regarding insect and fungoid pests, carried on by the staff of entomologists and mycologists, is watched with keen interest by the planting community.

The technical and commercial side of education can show equally good results, thanks to the Board of Industrial Training. The ready response of the people of Port-of-Spain to the educational facilities provided for them may be gauged from the numbers of persons who have taken the following courses at the Victoria Institute during the past twelve years:—Book-keeping, 604; Building Construction, 117; Painting, 105; Dressmaking, 750; Short-hand, 825; Drawing, 463. Numerous other subjects are taught; and the grand total of those who have attended the various courses amounts to 5,412. So sensible, indeed, are the citizens of the value of the work done at the Victoria Institute that, at a public meeting held in Port-of-Spain in April 1911, it was unanimously resolved that the Colony's Memorial

to King Edward VII. should take the form of an additional wing to that already capacious building.

The Census of 1911 shows that the population of Trinidad has increased by almost sixty thousand in the last ten years. Evidences of prosperity abound. The improved position may in part be traced to the adoption of a wiser policy regarding Crown-lands. The Colony has been fortunate in the succession of two very able Directors of Public Works. Areas of Crown-land have been set apart for the conservation of forest and water supply. Crown-lands are now being alienated upon a definite and orderly plan, and upon terms slightly more commensurate with their value. A network of well-built, well-graded roads covers the island. New roads are being added as fast as financial considerations permit. An abundant supply of pure water has been provided for the principal towns. Under the Railway Department two important extensions, after prolonged and unaccountable delays, are about to be undertaken. The first sod, indeed, of the Rio Claro line has already been cut. When these new lines are completed, it is to be hoped that the management of the Trinidad Government Railway will be revised and brought more into consonance with modern railway ideas, and with the requirements of a growing population and of a tropical climate.

The important cane-farming industry of Trinidad has attained an assured position. Thanks to the security given to the cane farmers by the manufacturers' guarantee of a minimum price of nine shillings per ton of canes, these industrious small-holders continue to number from eleven to twelve

thousand, and to produce rather more than one-third of the island's crop. If the so-called sliding scale arranged in 1907 were to evince a little more flexibility in sliding upwards from nine shillings when the price of sugar is high, there is no doubt that even this satisfactory position would be improved upon. Agricultural Banks, however, are urgently needed, and the question of their early establishment should be considered seriously by the Colonial Government. The Report of the Committee which recently inquired into this subject in British Guiana contains valuable information and suggestions. Many of its recommendations are applicable to Trinidad, though it may be hoped that, in the latter Colony, the principle of mutual unlimited liability will not be too hastily dismissed.

It is perhaps the discovery of great deposits of oil that has done most to stimulate financial enterprise in Trinidad. For several years past the existence of oil in various parts of the island has been known, and the position of the anticlines accurately located. But it was only the flotation of a series of Trinidad Oil Companies in the early part of 1910 that brought the facts prominently before the investing public. Since then, exploitation has been rapid, and nearly forty companies have been formed. The 29th of April 1911 will remain memorable in the annals of the island as the date on which its first cargo of petroleum was shipped—for America. After the inevitable “shake-out” of weak concerns, and the equally inevitable amalgamations, there is no doubt that Trinidad will take a place as one of the principal oil-producing countries of the world.

How far the Colony itself will participate in the profits is another question. No export tax is imposed upon oil: a royalty only in certain cases. If the officers and the machinery of the industry are to come chiefly from the United States, while the oil and the dividends go thither, then the labourers alone in Trinidad would appear to derive much advantage. Clause 57 of the Land Regulations states indeed that "No licence shall be granted to any Company which is not British in its control and organisation"; but to such a very precocious infant industry it is an easy task to surmount that obstacle.

Another factor in the new prosperity of the British West Indies is undoubtedly the surprisingly rapid improvement in the sanitation of the towns, and in the healthiness of the islands generally. The late Sir Rubert Boyce, in his two books, *Mosquito or Man*, and *Health, Progress, and Administration in the West Indies*, has borne eloquent testimony to the admirable efficiency of the measures taken to exterminate the sources of tropical disease. Vigorous and sustained campaigns against the mosquito have succeeded in practically eliminating yellow fever, and in greatly diminishing the prevalence of malaria, the twin scourges of the tropics in olden days. The death-rate of West Indian towns can now stand comparison with that of almost any European cities. Personal health may indeed be said to depend on personal habits.

With the improvement in the reputation of the West Indies for healthiness, there has come a considerable increase in the annual incursion of

tourists. In several of the islands there are now first-class hotels. Jamaica is especially well-provided in this respect. The introduction of motor cars has rendered sight-seeing pleasanter and more expeditious, and has brought a wider extent of country within visiting range. When scenery, vegetation, and climate—all such as to capture the fancy of the winter migrant—have been gratuitously advertised by recent, but not too recent, eruptions and earthquakes, the combination is one to titillate pleasantly the jaded palate of the most hardened globe-trotter.

Finally, there has been a small, but increasing, and very valuable influx of young British settlers of an excellent type. This is especially noticeable in some of the smaller islands, such as Dominica, Tobago, and St Lucia. Coming at a time of depression, they bought their land cheap; and, equipped with common-sense, energy, and moderate means, they have, in most cases, prospered.

The history of the West Indian depression may be given in statistical form by a comparison of the value of the imports and exports, and of the amount of the revenue and expenditure, of various Colonies during certain typical periods.

An average of the five years, 1877-1881, shows the position in the days of prosperity before the great slump of 1883, which led to the appointment of the Royal Commission of 1884.

Then the depression of the five years from 1892-1896, which was the immediate cause of the Royal Commission of 1897, may be compared with that of the quinquennial period from 1898-1902, preceding the Brussels Convention.

The extent of the recovery is indicated in the figures for the five years 1905-6 to 1909-10:—

#### I. GRENADA.

	IMPORTS.	EXPORTS.	REVENUE.	EXPENDITURE
1877-1881	£137,006	£162,109	£34,492	£34,217
1892-1896	170,499	225,252	58,559	60,219
1898-1902	231,214	290,246	68,974	62,769
1905-6—1909-10	264,278	311,097	73,203	71,335

#### II. JAMAICA.

1877-1881	£1,452,054	£1,343,723	£535,369	£529,908
1892-1896	2,087,269	1,820,052	801,422	812,311
1898-1902	1,825,829	1,911,855	851,494	831,855
1905-6—1909-10	2,419,826	2,221,590	1,058,689	1,044,069

#### III. TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO.

	IMPORTS.	EXPORTS.	REVENUE.	EXPENDITURE
1877-1881	£2,136,854	£2,169,944	£434,288	£422,849
1892-1896	2,266,043	2,175,426	591,985	573,092
1898-1902	2,530,770	2,479,063	700,932	689,661
1905-6—1909-10	3,154,136	3,133,364	834,547	835,959

#### IV. BARBADOS.

1877-1881	£1,112,076	£1,148,446	£130,344	£127,788
1892-1896	1,147,849	899,938	163,373	172,220
1898-1902	999,300	815,295	185,147	189,293
1905-6—1909-10	1,170,327	928,066	198,484	190,747

#### V. BRITISH GUIANA.

1877-1881	£2,046,501	£2,697,436	£400,515	£400,376
1892-1896	1,631,008	2,100,198	577,599	576,579
1898-1902	1,388,499	1,838,756	532,702	516,151
1905-6—1909-10	1,746,354	1,927,711	537,088	525,168

From the above tables it is clear that the bold policy of Grenada has been amply justified. As soon as sugar ceased to pay, Grenada courageously elected to "cut her losses," abandoned sugar, and devoted herself to the cultivation of cacao and spices. Her progress has been steady, and her prosperity now far surpasses that of the palmiest days of sugar.

In Jamaica, sugar has been relegated to a very subordinate position by the gigantic growth of the banana industry. The continuous expansion of her trade, even during the worst periods, is very satisfactory.

In Trinidad, cacao is king, though sugar still occupies an important position in an ever-widening circle of industries. After two decades of comparative stagnation, this Colony has, during the last ten years, made almost magical progress.

Barbados and British Guiana still continue to put their trust almost solely in sugar. Their statistics, therefore, form an epitome of the fortunes of this industry. The blasting effect of the bounties is seen at its worst, and the recovery due to the Brussels Convention and to Canadian preference is clearly shown.

What, then, of the future? There is no reason why the recovery should not continue, and result in complete convalescence. Care must be taken to guard against any relapse, such as would certainly supervene on the withdrawal of the Canadian preference, or of the Imperial Department of Agriculture. And certain further remedies are urgently needed.

Action requires to be taken along the lines indicated in the admirable Report of Lord Balfour of Burleigh's Royal Commission:—(a) Improved and cheapened telegraphic communication among the West Indian Islands, and between them and the outside world; (b) a better steamer service between those islands and the Dominion of Canada; and (c) a great extension of the existing Canadian preference, by means of a re-arrangement of tariffs.

The case is well put in the terms of a resolution passed by the Legislative Council of Trinidad and Tobago on 27th March 1911 :—

“ That in the opinion of this Council it is advisable to establish reciprocal trade relations between the Dominion of Canada and this Colony, on the lines recommended in the Report of the Canada West Indies Commission, with a view of assuring a continuance of the preference now given by Canada, which is of vital importance to the sugar industry, and of securing like treatment for cacao, coconuts, asphalt, oil, rubber, fruit or other staples on which import duty is now chargeable, or may hereafter be made chargeable by the Dominion ; and this Council recommends that a rebate of not more than 20 per cent. be allowed on the duty imposed on a reasonable number of articles of Canadian production to be mutually agreed upon : Provided—

- “(a) That in the case of Canada the preferential treatment at present extended to a certain quantity of foreign sugar be withdrawn.
- “(b) That certificates of origin accompany all shipments to be entered under the reciprocal Agreement, certifying that such shipments are *bonâ fide* the products of the United Kingdom or the Dominion of Canada, as the case may be ; and
- “(c) That preferential treatment be extended only to such Canadian and British goods as come direct from Canadian and British ports.”

A twenty per cent. tariff abatement is not a very long step in the direction of Inter-Colonial Free Trade, but still it would be a beginning.

The inherent difficulties of agreement among half-a-dozen West Indian Governments are immense, but still the above resolution outlines a policy upon which a majority of the Colonies would be in accord. All, excepting Jamaica and Grenada, have expressed approval of the general tenor of the recommendations of Lord Balfour's Commission. It is therefore surprising that no action has been taken to give effect to them. Such action might already have been taken, but for the error of the Royal Commissioners in embodying in their Report\* the fatal paragraphs, Nos. 161 to 165.

It unhappily occurred that towards the end of their enquiry the question arose of the renewal of the contract for the carriage of His Majesty's mails between the United Kingdom and the Antilles. The Commissioners, perhaps after insufficient reflection, allowed themselves to make the unexpected suggestion that these mails should be conveyed by way of Canada !

The natural hostility aroused by this proposal, which was the first demanding decision, threw the other recommendations of the Commissioners into the background, and concentrated West Indian attention upon securing a direct mail service with the Mother Country.

From 1905 to 1910 the Transatlantic West Indian mails had been conveyed fortnightly, without subsidy, upon a poundage basis, by the Royal Mail Steam Packet Company. This arrangement the Company now gave notice to terminate, and supported its claim for a subsidy by a skilfully organised disorganisation of its sailings. The Colonial Office

\* Cd. 5369.

was embarrassed by the impatience, as well as by the conflicting desires, of the West Indian Colonies ; and the Opposition Press was not slow to perceive the possibility of a useful party cry, and made the most of it. In the end, the combined wisdom of the Colonial Office and the General Post Office proved no match for the native genius of the Company. The spoils of victory consisted in a contract for seven years, under which, on the one hand, the voyage of 3,600 miles from Southampton to Barbados has been shortened from thirteen to twelve days, while, on the other, the Company obtains an annual subvention of £63,000, equivalent to a dividend of 7 per cent. upon the whole of the £900,000 of its Ordinary Stock.

To this striking result several causes contributed. In the first place, there was a general recognition, supported by five years' experience, of the fact that natural competition among unsubsidised lines cannot be relied on to provide an efficient and regular service, so long as that competition is restricted by the existence of the combinations euphemistically known as "Shipping Conferences."

Secondly, the mail-route between Britain and the West Indies inevitably becomes the passenger-route ; and children of the tropics revolted at the prospect of accompanying their correspondence through the wintry rigours of the North Atlantic.

Thirdly, they have a strong sentimental attachment to a Company which has been associated with the West Indies ever since 1839, and provides the chief means of communication among them by a really admirable service of Inter-Colonial steamers.

And fourthly, the absence of any Central West

Indian Government permitted the Company to play off, most skilfully, one Colony against another. The Company had, moreover, the inestimable advantage of keeping its cards unseen, while those of the various Colonies lay, face upwards, on the table.

Instances of the grave disability imposed upon the West Indies by their disunion might easily be multiplied. The proceedings of successive Imperial Conferences proclaim the added prestige and influence that have come to Australia and to South Africa through federation or unification. At none of those Conferences have the affairs of the West Indies been considered. Scarcely, indeed, have the West Indies been mentioned. A West Indian Federation would be entitled, as of right, to a seat and a voice at all future Conferences. And the obstacles to Federation are by no means insuperable. The difficulty of communication between the various islands is certainly not greater than between Western Australia, Tasmania, and the other States of the Australian Commonwealth.

The complete success of the unification of Trinidad and Tobago proves that the blue waters of the Caribbean need form no barrier; and if the Federal Government of the Leeward Islands has been less successful, it is because the framers of that clumsy constitution failed through halting between two opinions.

Leaving Jamaica aside, the length of the whole chain of Colonies, from British Guiana to the Virgin Isles, does not exceed 900 miles. If, now or hereafter, Jamaica should desire to enter the group of Federated Colonies, a hearty welcome would await her, but she has interests so diverse, perhaps still

further diverging, from those of the other islands, that at first she would almost certainly prefer the rôle of a New Zealand or a Newfoundland.

Among the other Colonies the initial tie must be of the very slightest. The bond must be so light as not to gall the feelings of the most susceptible island. Collective must be carefully distinguished from individual interests. Local institutions must be jealously safeguarded. The Central Authority must be superimposed on the local governments already existing, even though such a course involves, in the beginning, some additional cost. Changes must be introduced gradually. Amalgamation of posts must only be made as vacancies occur. Unification of the West Indian Civil Service would be a strong consolidating influence. Assimilation of tariffs would be a stronger. Sir Robert Hamilton, in 1894, reported that "the time has not yet arrived for the establishment of such a Federation." The position is very different in 1912. There are thoughtful men in each Colony who think that the time *has* now arrived. Everything depends on the first step. What is it to be? Not, let us hope, yet another Royal Commission. Rather let it take the form of a free and open Conference, summoned, indeed, at the suggestion of Downing Street, but held in the Antilles.

If, as has been suggested, the members of such a Conference were to take for their agenda paper the Clauses of the Federal Council of Australasia Act, 1885, ch. 60, a way would open before them. Tentative, conciliatory, combinative, yet allowing the widest internal freedom of action to individual

States, this great constructive Act contains many provisions admirably suited to present West Indian requirements.

By such a beginning the centripetal impulse would be given. Time and experience would do the rest. What though, as in Australia, Federation were to take fifteen years to reach its final form? Those trees which thrive slowly outlive all plants of quicker growth.

## XIX

### THE OUTLOOK

*September 1912*

SINCE this book went to press, an event has happened which necessitates a brief additional chapter. On 1st August the President of the Board of Trade announced in the House of Commons that the Government had decided to withdraw from the Sugar Convention. This decision is the latest manifestation of the remarkable influence exercised by Russia upon our Foreign Office during the last three or four years. From it two results may be expected to follow. First of all, we may expect to see a gradual but steady displacement, by Russian bounty-fed sugar, of our unbountied imports from the central European States. For it is scarcely probable that Russian diplomacy will be so unskilful as to allow the Protocol of 17th March 1912 to limit Russian exports to the United Kingdom after our withdrawal from the Convention. Secondly, it is to be hoped, in the interest of Free Trade, that France, Germany and Austria will penalise our exports of jam, biscuits, and confectionery, as being manufactured with bounty-fed Russian sugar, and therefore infringing the Free Trade principles of the Brussels Convention. Thirdly, a shock will have been given to the new

confidence in the British West Indian sugar industry. Confidence is always established slowly, but in the nine years of the Convention it had time to promote a considerable investment of capital in the sugar industry, and to effect a remarkable improvement both in cultivation and in manufacture. These results would have been greater still, but for our partial withdrawal from the Convention in 1907, and the subsequent fear that our half-hearted adherence thereafter would end, as it has ended, in our final withdrawal.

At any rate, that withdrawal leaves our hands free. We are no longer bound by the decisions of a conclave in which we had but one vote among fourteen. Tariff Reformers are now at liberty to advocate their remedy of Colonial preference on sugar. On the other hand, the way is again clear to the simple remedy of countervailing duties on sugar directly subsidised by foreign state-bounties : a remedy which—let jam-makers say what they please—is perfectly consistent with the strictest canons of Free Trade. By all means let us accept any bounties which Russia may be pleased to give us, but let us collect them at the port of entry for the benefit of the nation as a whole, rather than allow them to swell still further the already inflated dividends of the great confectionery firms.

Severe as the blow inflicted upon 1st August undoubtedly was, it was sensibly softened by the simultaneous arrival of the news that the Legislature of Trinidad and Tobago had, on the previous day, by a majority of 13 to 5, approved the Trade Agreement with Canada. This was particularly gratifying, both because in Trinidad there

had been a strong pro-American opposition to the Agreement, and because it was announced by the Governor that it was unnecessary to impose any new duties to make up the estimated loss of £8,000 to the Revenue. The increase of trade may be expected of itself to supply the deficiency.

All the West Indian Colonies concerned have now given their assent to this important arrangement. Downing Street has signified its approval. The Agreement needs only ratification by the Dominion Parliament. The thanks of all West Indians and Canadians are due to Lord Balfour of Burleigh and his colleagues of the Royal Commission of 1910 for laying the foundation of this happy result; and to the Delegates who met in Ottawa in March 1912 for having arranged the final terms of the Agreement. It is safe to predict that their work will never be undone. Indeed, it may confidently be expected to lead to further reductions of duties, and perhaps ultimately to complete Free Trade between these two great sections of the Empire.

Another matter of importance to certain of the West Indian Colonies seems likely, ere long, to enter upon a new phase. Indentured immigration from India to the Crown Colonies was the subject of enquiry by a Departmental Committee, whose Report\* was issued in 1910. Everyone must have been gratified to read the statement of the Committee to the effect that "both in British Guiana and Trinidad the immigrant is well treated during his term of indenture, and has excellent prospects of acquiring competence, and even wealth, after

\* Cd. 5192.

its expiration" (par. 409). Referring further to Trinidad, the Committee says: "It seems to us probable that Indian immigration may be necessary for some time to come to push forward the agricultural development of the Colony, and to maintain its existing industries. But a time must clearly come when such immigration should cease, and in the meantime it should not, in our opinion, be encouraged beyond what is strictly necessary to keep the labour market adequately supplied" (par. 411).

This reinforces the finding of the Royal Commission of 1897: "We are of opinion that the number of immigrants to be introduced every year should be reduced to a minimum that will suffice for the working of existing estates, and that State assistance in aid of immigration should ultimately cease."

"State assistance in aid of immigration" comes perilously nearer to the general idea of a bounty than is altogether compatible with the consistency of a Colony which has always been foremost in its disapproval of the bounties of other countries. It is improbable indeed that, had the export of sugar from Trinidad been a more important item in the world's markets, this State-subsidy to her sugar industry would have escaped the attention of the Continental representatives at the Permanent Commission sitting in Brussels. The Royal Commission of 1897, indeed, dealt with the ethical aspect of this question in their Report, on page 39, par. 302, as follows: "The question of the assistance given to immigration at the expense of the public revenue is one that requires careful

consideration. We are of opinion that if any industry requires immigrants it should pay the whole cost connected with their introduction. It is argued that the introduction of immigrants is a benefit to the whole Colony, and that the whole Colony should pay a portion of the cost of introducing them. This view as to the introduction of immigrants being a benefit to the whole Colony is not held by those persons with whom the immigrants compete in the labour market, and, if the argument were pushed to its logical conclusion, it would follow that every industry should get a bonus from the State, as every industry is a gain to the whole community."

It is satisfactory, therefore, to find that the Secretary for State has taken steps at length to bring about the termination of this anomaly. In his admirable dispatch\* of 19th June 1911, to the Governor of Trinidad, Mr Harcourt clearly states the case for the discontinuance of this subvention, bonus, or bounty, in the following terms:—

"In Trinidad the revenue specially assigned to immigration is not sufficient to meet the cost, a portion of which falls, in consequence, on the general revenue of the Colony. In British Guiana the Immigration Fund constituted by indenture fees and special immigration taxation is adequate to defray the expenditure which falls on it without any vote in aid. I am not aware that this has been found to involve any undue burden on the estates on which immigrant labour is employed, nor has it caused the demand for such labour to cease. You have no doubt learned that the

\* Trinidad Council Paper 157 of 1911.

Governor of Jamaica has also recently taken the step of raising the indenture fee to a level at which it is anticipated that the Immigration Fund will be self-supporting. I can find no sufficient reason why a different system should prevail in Trinidad, and I do not feel able to acquiesce in the indefinite continuance of the existing distribution of immigration charges. . . . Apart from the example of other West Indian Colonies, it is not, in my opinion, possible to defend, as a permanent feature of the economic life of the Colony, a system by which the employers of a particular class of labour are subsidised at the expense of the general community."

The Secretary of State goes on to direct that henceforth the salaries of the Protector of Immigrants and his staff, and the cost of the Medical Department alone, shall be charged to General Revenue, while the whole cost of collecting and introducing the immigrants must be defrayed out of the Immigration Fund, which is raised by special taxation.

This is quite excellent, and it may be hoped that Mr Harcourt will deal in the same spirit with the inequitable method by which the Immigration Fund is raised. The effect of this method is to give a *second* subsidy to the fortunate employers of indentured labour, at the expense of their brother-planters. For the majority of cacao-planters employ no indentured immigrants at all, and yet have to pay immigration tax upon every pound of cacao they export. Moreover, several sugar estates, employing indentured labour, but producing a sugar

for consumption in the limited local market, obviously escape export tax and their fair contribution to the Immigration Fund. Their astute owners thus extract a third tribute from the pockets of their less fortunate colleagues.

Doubtless, the planter who raises his crops by means of free labour may fairly be called upon to make some contribution to the Immigration Fund, because of the benefit which he derives from the employment of time-expired immigrants introduced in the past. But at present such contribution is far too high. The gross injustice described above can only be remedied by largely augmenting the indenture-fee payable on each indentured immigrant employed, and by reducing the tax payable upon produce exported.

This policy is partly foreshadowed in Mr Harcourt's despatch:—“I understand that the indenture fee in British Guiana is at present fixed at £12, 10s; in Jamaica it has now been raised to £20, 10s. Allowing for the additional burden imposed on Trinidad employers by the “repatriation fee,” it must be admitted that the indenture fee of £5 now charged in Trinidad is low in comparison, and it would appear desirable that the increased revenue required should be sought from indenture fees rather than from any increase of special taxation.”

At the present time the eyes of each of the West Indian Islands are directed to the Panama Canal, in eager expectation that the day of its opening will be to each the inauguration of a new era of abounding trade, commerce, and general

prosperity. Each island expects to be the principal port of call for the steamships of all nations on the voyage between the Canal and the English Channel. Each asks when the mother-country is going to begin the expenditure of the million pounds or more necessary to convert its harbour into a fortified coaling-station. To the impartial onlooker it is not clear why the Panama Canal should bring prosperity to Trinidad, Grenada, Barbados, or St Vincent, for instance, any more than the Suez Canal to Majorca, Minorca, Delos, or Patmos. It is true that there is a Malta in the Mediterranean ; and there will probably be a Malta in the Caribbean. The question is, which island will have the good fortune to be chosen for the *rôle*? Many considerations, strategical, and commercial, will doubtless weigh in the final decision, but geographical considerations will be heavy in the balance. The islands named all lie too far south of the direct route from Colon to the Channel. St Lucia has a good harbour, with large unused barracks, and could be easily fortified. The Danish island of St Thomas has a sheltered haven, a free port, and an unique position absolutely upon the direct line between the Isthmus and the great ports of Northern Europe. But is unlikely that France will permit considerations of cost to interfere with this opportunity of raising her colony of Guadeloupe to a position of the very first importance.

It is probable that to the majority of the islands the opening of a College of Tropical Agriculture would prove a matter of far greater practical importance than the opening of the Panama Canal.

It is exceedingly encouraging to observe the increasing support given to this idea, and, indeed, the greatly enhanced interest taken in the whole subject of agricultural education throughout the Antilles. At the West Indian Agricultural Conference held in Trinidad, in January 1912, under the auspices of the Imperial Department of Agriculture, several valuable papers were read bearing upon various aspects of agricultural education; and in April, at a meeting of the Agricultural Society in Port-of-Spain, a useful discussion took place, based upon illuminating papers submitted by Dr Fredholm and Professor Henricksen. At the Conference, considerable approval was found for a suggestion made in the Report of Lord Reay's Departmental Committee on Agricultural Education, to the effect that a "Readership in Tropical Agriculture, established at one or more of the British Universities, would be of considerable advantage to India, the West Indies, and other tropical and sub-tropical Colonies."\* A Readership would be most valuable as an immediate step in advance, but it would by no means remove the need for a College of Tropical Agriculture. Such an Institution, if established now and upon a generous scale, would attract immense support. It is not only the West Indies that are feeling the want of scientific instruction in agriculture, but tropical countries everywhere. Puerto Rico has just led the way by establishing at Mayaguez an Agricultural College of University rank. The British Colony that first supplies this want for the Empire will not

\* Cd. 4206., pp. 13 and 37.

only gain renown, but the very practical advantage of the residence in her midst of many of the most famous teachers, as well as the most brilliant learners, in the whole wide domain of tropical agricultural science.

The importance of Agricultural Conferences in the West Indies has, in the past, been sometimes signalised by a great convulsion of nature, as in the case of the Jamaica earthquake. In 1912 no such manifestation occurred. The skies of the various Departments of Agriculture had, indeed, for some time previously been heavily overcast. During the Conference, occasional atmospheric disturbances took place. But the storm never broke, and subsequently died away, accompanied by loud rumblings in the South. The Conference had done much to clear the air ; and the agricultural barometer is now "set fair."

Indirectly, one of the most valuable results of the Conference has been the additional evidence provided of the feasibility of West Indian united action. Although somewhat outside the strict scope of its agenda, resolutions were debated and carried regarding both the Brussels Convention and Reciprocity with Canada. The latter resolution strengthened the hands of the West Indian delegates at that further Conference at Ottawa, which has achieved such important results. Is it not now legitimate to hope, nay, to believe, that another Conference, composed of delegates freely chosen from all over the West Indies, might succeed in removing many of the obstacles, real or apparent, on the path to Federation ? Mr Gideon Murray's

brilliant analysis, historical, constitutional, and administrative of the problem of a closer union of the West Indian Colonies, has brought it, at last, into the range of practical politics. The next step must be to focus public opinion upon it, and to create a body to organise a special Conference for the full and free discussion of this great question. And this demands the formation of a West Indian Federation League.





# WEST INDIA ISLANDS

Natural Scale 1 12,790,000

100 50 0 100 200 300 Miles

(Br) British Possessions, coloured red. (U.S.) United States, yellow.

(Du) Dutch; (Da) Danish; (Fr) French.

Railways thus — Submarine Telegraph Lines Sub Tel or S.T.





